

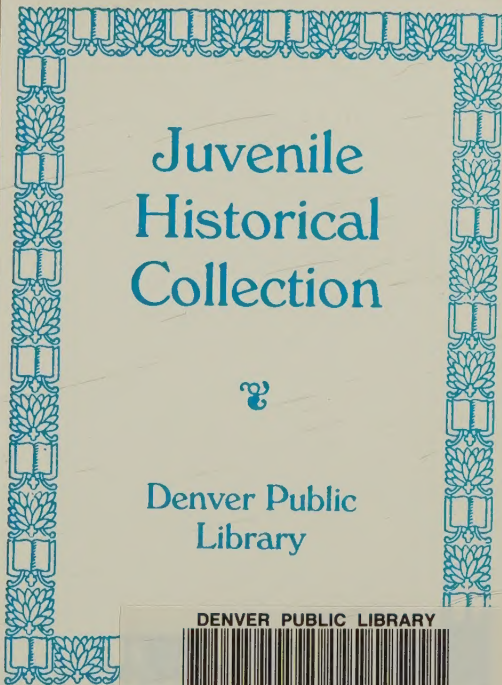
THE YOUNG VOLCANO EXPLORERS

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WEST INDIES



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THE YOUNG VOLCANO EXPLORERS.

Pan-American Series

THE
YOUNG VOLCANO EXPLORERS

OR

AMERICAN BOYS IN THE WEST INDIES

BY

EDWARD STRATEMEYER

Author of "Lost on the Orinoco," "With Washington in the West,"
"American Boys' Life of William McKinley," "Old Glory Series,"
"Ship and Shore Series," "Bound to Succeed Series," etc.

ILLUSTRATED BY A. B. SHUTE

BOSTON
LEE AND SHEPARD

1902

RO1983 20479

Published October, 1902



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THE YOUNG VOLCANO EXPLORERS

Norwood Press
J. S. CUSHING & CO.—BERWICK & SMITH
Norwood, Mass. U. S. A.

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PREFACE

“THE YOUNG VOLCANO EXPLORERS” is a complete story in itself, but forms the second volume of a line issued under the general title of the “Pan American Series.”

When I began this series of tales I had in mind to acquaint my young readers with some of the sights to be seen in the three Americas,—especially such portions as lie outside of the United States. In the first volume, called “Lost on the Orinoco,” I told of the sight-seeing and adventures of five American lads, who, in company with their academy professor, who is also a great traveler and hunter, journey to Venezuela, our sister Republic on the north-east coast of South America. The boys visit several principal cities, inspect cocoa and coffee plantations as well as gold and silver mines, and then explore the mighty river already named.

In the present volume the scene is shifted from Venezuela to the West Indies, that group of islands of which Porto Rico has already become the property

of the United States. Because of the recent Spanish-American War, and the still more recent volcanic disturbances in Martinique and St. Vincent, these islands are of unusual interest to us. In this book the boys and their instructor sail from Venezuela to Jamaica, stopping at Kingston, and then go to Havana, Cuba. In Cuba several places of importance are visited, and then the trip is continued to Hayti and to Porto Rico, where the party travel overland from San Juan to Ponce. At the latter city word is received that the fathers of two of the boys have gone to St. Pierre, Martinique, and the party start for that point, only to encounter the effects of the volcanic eruption when still far at sea. But Martinique is visited, nevertheless, and later on St. Vincent also, and in spite of the many dangers, all ends happily.

In penning this tale I have, as usual, tried to be as accurate as possible when giving historical or geographical details. The latest and best American and Spanish authorities have been consulted, and, in the case of the disasters at Martinique and St. Vincent, I have read with care the reports of all who suffered and escaped, and of those who have since visited these spots of interest.

Once again I wish to thank the many thousands who have perused my former works. May the present volume fulfil their every expectation.

EDWARD STRATEMEYER.

September 15, 1902.

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THE YOUNG VOLCANO EXPLORERS

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCING THE BOYS

"HERE comes the mail boy, Darry. Now for letters and newspapers from home. There ought to be plenty of letters for all of us."

"Don't be too sure Frank. The mails in Venezuela are mighty slow, especially now when there is another revolution on."

"Oh, I don't believe this one-horse revolution will have anything to do with the mails," put in a third boy, as he joined his chums, who were lounging in the hallway of a spacious hotel in Caracas, the capital city of Venezuela. "They have them too often, you know."

"Hush, don't call it a one-horse revolution, Beans," returned Darry Crane, in a warning voice. "The people who live here think it's just as im-

portant as any revolution that ever was—and it probably is, to them.”

“There goes the professor for letters now!” burst out Frank Newton. “Oh, I do hope he gets lots of them!” Frank was always more anxious for letters from home than anyone else. “Yes, here he comes with a handful, and an armful of papers in the bargain.”

The coming of the mail always attracted a crowd of patrons of the hotel, and soon the boys found themselves surrounded by those anxious to get their letters and papers. Looking, they saw the gentleman who had their mail wave his hand to them and disappear in the direction of the hotel courtyard and they speedily followed.

“What have you for me, Professor?” was the question asked by one and all, and now two more boys hurried up, making five in all who waited eagerly for news from home.

It was an interesting group, and while the mail matter is being distributed, we will take the opportunity of introducing each individual to the reader.

The oldest boy present was Mark Robertson. He was a lad of seventeen, and was the son of a dry goods importer. His father owned an interest in

several mills in England and Scotland and made semi-yearly trips across the Atlantic, and the family were well-to-do.

When at home Mark lived on Madison Avenue in New York city, and directly opposite to him lived Frank Newton, another of the boys of the group. Although Frank was a year younger than Mark, the two were warm chums. Frank's father was a banker, and if he was not a millionaire he was certainly well provided for financially.

The liveliest boy in the crowd was Dartworth Crane, always called Darry for short. He was but fifteen, the son of a rich Chicago cattle dealer, and to him life was one long, sunshiny holiday. It was very hard for Darry to take anything seriously, and his good nature was as spontaneous as it was catching.

"Darry would make a cow laugh," said Frank, more than once, and the others agreed with him. As said before, Mark was Frank's closest chum, but Darry was no mean second.

The fourth lad of the group was a tall, well-built individual of sixteen, with a high forehead and a thick mass of curly hair. This was Samuel Winthrop, generally called "Beans," because he had been born

and brought up in Boston. Sam was the son of a well-to-do widow of the Back Bay district. He was a studious, observant young fellow, seldom, however, given to "airing his knowledge," and he and Mark were as friendly as were Frank and Darry.

The fifth youth in the crowd was a tall, lank individual of about Mark's age, with a white freckled face and reddish hair. His name was Jacob Hockley, and he was the son of a millionaire lumber dealer of Pennsylvania. His manner was varied, at times exceedingly "bossy," as the others termed it, and then again exceedingly sour and morose. The latter mood had won for him the nickname of "Glummy" or "Jake the Glum," and although he objected strenuously to being called such a name, yet it clung to him in spite of everything. Hockley had plenty of money and spent it freely, but even this failed to make him any close friendships.

"Glummy thinks money is everything," said Mark in speaking of the matter one day. "But sooner or later he is bound to learn that there are some things that even money can't buy." And Mark was right. True friendship is never a matter of dollars and cents.

For several years all these boys had attended

a boarding academy located among the hills of New Hampshire. Lakeview Academy, as it was called, was presided over by Professor Amos Strong, a kindly and well educated gentleman, who had in years gone by been a great traveler and hunter. Professor Strong had often told the lads about his hunting expeditions in various parts of the globe, and through these stories a plan had originated to visit Central and South America, the expedition to be under the personal supervision of the professor himself.

At first Professor Strong could not see his way clear to leaving the academy, but a fire came and destroyed the place, and at the same time the professor's brother, also a teacher, left the faculty of Harvard. It was then arranged that the school building should be re-built under the directions of the brother, who was afterward to assume control of the institution. This would give Professor Strong the liberty he desired and which he, in secret, greatly craved. For many years a wanderer on the face of the earth, binding himself down to steady teaching had proved rather irksome to him.

After a good deal of discussion it was decided that the party of six should first visit Venezuela,

and in the first volume of this series, entitled "Lost on the Orinoco," I related the particulars of the journey from New York to La Guayra, the nearest seaport, and told of the sight seeing and adventures while visiting Caracas, the capital, Macuto, the fashionable summer resort, the great Gulf of Maracaibo, and other points of interest, including cocoa and coffee plantations and gold and silver mines, and also a never-to-be-forgotten journey up that immense river, the Orinoco, the second largest stream in South America.

The boys had had adventures in plenty, and becoming lost on the Orinoco had almost proved a serious happening for Mark and Frank, who had wandered away in a jungle that seemed to have no end. All of the party had met more than one wild animal, and a squall on Lake Maracaibo had come close to sending them all to the bottom.

It was not to be expected that four such whole-souled lads as Mark, Frank, Darry and Sam could get along smoothly with such an over-bearing and peculiar youth as Jake Hockley. They were sorry that the bully was along, and it was not long before there was a bitter quarrel and some of the boys came to blows with Hockley. This was stopped by Pro-

fessor Strong, who said they must do better in the future.

With no special friend in the party, and with a strong desire to be "sporty," and to do things which were not permitted by the professor, Hockley struck up an acquaintance with one Dan Markel, a man from Baltimore, whose reputation was none of the best. This Markel succeeded in getting all of Hockley's money away from him, and it was only through a discovery made by Mark and Frank that Markel was arrested and the money was recovered. But Markel had escaped, and what had become of him nobody knew. Getting back his money and also a watch which had been taken, had made Hockley friendly to Frank and Mark for the time being, and the bully was also friendly to Sam and Darry, for they had saved him from being crushed to death by a boa constrictor, having shot and killed the hideous reptile just in the nick of time.

It had been the intention of Professor Strong to take the boys from Venezuela to Brazil, but while the party was resting at a mining town called Castroville, there came in a report that the tropical fevers were raging in the latter republic, and that it was likely Venezuela, Brazil, Colombia, and some other

countries would soon be mixed up in revolutions and wars, and it was then decided by a general vote that they should move northward again and visit the West Indies, taking in Jamaica, Cuba, Porto Rico, and other important islands.

"That will just suit me," said Mark, when this decision was reached. "I want to see where the battles of the Spanish-American War were fought and also what sort of a place Porto Rico, our new possession, is."

"And I want to get out of a country that grows boa constrictors," came from Hockley. "Ugh, they're awful. Professor, are there such snakes in the West Indies?"

"I never heard of any, Jacob. But they have poisonous reptiles, such as are to be found in all tropical climates."

"Well, I won't care so much for them, if they aren't six or seven yards long," grumbled the tall youth.

"That's Glummy all over," whispered Frank to Darry. "Every time he speaks of that constrictor he tacks a yard or two on to the length."

"Never mind—it's only a snake story, you know," returned light-hearted Darry. "They don't count,

for nobody believes them. We'll never get credit for killing anything more than a snake as long as your arm."

The journey from Castroville to Caracas overland had been uneventful. They had stopped at numerous plantations and small towns on the way, and they had seen sheep and wild horses without number. They had also done considerable hunting, and each of the boys could now boast of being a creditable shot. If there was an exception it was Hockley, who, in spite of all the instructions given him by the professor, would take little pains in the handling of his gun.

On arriving at Caracas they put up at the same hotel which had been their stopping place on first visiting the capital. All had long before sent letters home speaking of their change of plans, and they were now anxious to ascertain how their parents would view the matter, even though, on leaving home, everything had been left to Professor Strong personally, he being fully competent to judge of what was best for all.

CHAPTER II

NEWS FROM HOME

LETTERS from home are always welcome, and doubly so when one has been out of reach of the mail for a long time. As Professor Strong held up nearly a dozen written communications, the lads fairly pounced upon them, and for the time being the newspapers were forgotten.

"Here's one for Mark and two for Frank," cried Darry. "Where is mine?"

"Here you are," said Frank, holding out three. "And here is one for you, Jake."

"And here's another 'for Jake," added Sam. "And two for myself."

"No, boys, these two are my own!" laughed Professor Strong, holding them back. "You mustn't expect all the good things, you know."

"Only one for me!" murmured Mark. "And Darry has three. That's hardly fair."

"You want to send your folks a bottle of ink and

some pens," replied Darry. "Never mind; I'll tell you what's in mine, after I read 'em."

"Don't say a word," burst out Frank. "Look at that letter, twelve or fifteen pages, and this one of mine has only four pages. Mark needn't complain."

"Here's a photograph," came slowly from Sam. "My mother! It was nice of her to send that." And he gazed at the picture affectionately.

Soon all were sitting in the hammocks and easy chairs at hand reading the letters received. There was all sorts of news from home, of more or less interest. Mark's father was just home from a trip to England and Scotland, and he and Mr. Newton were contemplating a trip together, for business as well as pleasure. Sam's mother had left Boston to visit relatives up in Maine, and hoped her only son would do his best to keep out of peril and mischief. Darry's letters told how his father had gone to Colorado to look up a big cattle deal, and there was also a letter from a sister who was just leaving home to go to boarding school. Hockley had word that his father had lost one saw mill by fire but had bought two mills to take its place, and that the elder Hockley was now president of a new Consolidated Lumber Company.

"Tell you what, pop's getting there," said Hockley, when he told this news to the others. "He'll be the richest lumber dealer in the country before he gets through," and he fairly swelled with pride over the announcement.

"I wonder where my father and yours will go," said Frank to Mark, after the letters had been read, not once but several times. "It's queer neither my letter nor yours tells that."

"I guess they hadn't made up their minds when the letters were written. I once heard father speak of coming down to Cuba and Jamaica. It would be queer if they did come down and we met them."

"That would be just all right," was the ready return, but as Mark spoke he never dreamed of the terrible circumstances which was to make that meeting a reality. Could he have looked ahead it would have caused him more than one shudder.

It had been determined that they should take the train for La Guayra on the following morning. There was to be a sailing of a steamer for Kingston and Havana one day later, and Professor Strong had already telegraphed ahead for the necessary accommodations.

"We can take our last look around Caracas to-

day," announced Professor Strong. "Have you boys any place in mind that you would like to visit?"

A general discussion arose. While it was at its height a gentleman who had driven to the hotel in his carriage came in and rushed up to the group.

"My own very dear friend, Amos Strong, once more," he said, with a strong Spanish accent. "I received word last night that you and the boys had come back to Caracas. So I made up my mind I must see you all again. And how have you been?" And he shook hands cordially.

"We are all right, Morano," was the professor's reply, as the boys crowded around to speak to the newcomer, who was a teacher at the University at Caracas and an old college friend of Professor Strong.

"But we've had lots of adventures," put in Darry.

"To be sure, Master Darry—you could not keep out of them. You see I have not forgotten how one of my horses once ran away with you," and Enrique Morano laughed.

Besides being an instructor at the Caracas University, Enrique Morano was the owner of a large plantation just outside of the city, which the party had once visited, much to the delight of all hands.

Now Morano insisted that he be allowed to send for his largest carriage and take them for a drive to such points of interest as they elected to see.

This was just what the boys wished, and inside of an hour the carriage was on hand and they piled in. Enrique Morano himself drove, with Professor Strong beside him. Soon the city itself was left behind and they were bowling along over a smooth highway in the direction of Antimano, situated some miles to the westward.

It was a perfect day and the boys enjoyed the sights greatly, as they passed plantation after plantation. The roadway was lined at some points with beautiful tropical trees, and flowers were by no means lacking.

"Tell you what, Señor Morano keeps good horse-flesh," remarked Darry as they spun along. "This is better than a drive in Lincoln Park."

"Or Central Park either," added Frank.

"Oh, my father keeps just as good horses," came from Hockley. "He's got a trotter that can beat all creation for stepping out on a smooth road like this."

So far they had passed but few turnouts on the highway. But now they saw approaching a carriage

with a single seat, drawn by a team of horses which were covered with foam. On the seat sat two men, both evidently Americans.

"Reckless drivers," murmured Enrique Morano, as the other carriage came closer. "Be careful there!" he called out, in Spanish, and pulled sharply to one side.

"Clear the track!" shouted one of the men, in English, and the tone of voice showed that he had been drinking. "We don't get out of the way for no sun-baked native!" And he cracked his whip loudly.

The carriage came closer and it was only by a few inches that it missed striking Enrique Morano's turnout. As it swept by the boys got a good look at the occupants.

"Dan Markel!" almost shouted Hockley and Mark, in a breath.

"That was Markel, just as sure as you are born," came from Frank. "Who would have expected to meet him here?"

"We ought to go after him," continued Hockley.

"You evidently know the man," said Enrique Morano, bringing his team to a halt and gazing inquiringly at the boys.

"He is the man who robbed Hockley," explained Professor. "He was captured once, down on the Orinoco, but he escaped."

"Ah, I see. Yes, he should be caught. And the other man, what of him?"

He looked at the boys again, but all shook their heads. They could not remember having seen the individual before.

"Guess he's another victim," was Mark's comment. "I don't believe Markel had any money of his own. He has struck up an acquaintance with some newcomer and is doing the sponging act."

"Or else he is spending the proceeds of another robbery," said Sam.

"Do you wish to go after the man?" asked Enrique Morano.

"Oh, well, you might as well let him go," yawned Hockley. "If we make another complaint and he is locked up, we may have to stay here as witnesses against him." Hockley would have liked to see Dan Markel behind the bars but he was afraid that the rascal might tell of some things which would prove discreditable to both of them.

"I'd really like to know if that other man was a

victim," mused Frank, as they continued on their way. "If he is, he ought to be warned."

There the matter was dropped, and for the time being Dan Markel was forgotten. When they came back to Caracas at nightfall they looked in several directions for the rascal but could catch no sight of him. The truth of the matter was that Markel had recognized several of the boys on the instant of passing them, and although partly intoxicated he still had wit enough left to keep hidden.

The party were to leave for La Guayra at nine in the morning, and the boys were up long before that time, taking a last look at their surroundings. Then came a good breakfast, and soon they were on the cars and winding over and around the mountains which separate the capital city of Venezuela from the seacoast.

"Here is where we had to get off and walk," said Mark, as the train rushed on. "Do you remember that, Frank?"

"To be sure I do. And I remember how you got lost in a hole under the cliffs, too."

"Yes, and not far away is the spot where you and Hockley pitched into each other," whispered Mark,

with a sly look at the bully, who sat just ahead. He did not think the lank youth heard, but he was mistaken.

"Raking up old sores, eh?" growled Hockley, swinging around and with his face very red. "I thought all that was to be dropped."

"It is to be dropped, too, Jake," answered Mark, quickly.

"Oh, yes," came with a sneer. "You're dropping it fast enough."

"But I didn't really mean anything, Jake," pleaded Mark. "It—er—just came to my mind, that's all. It's past and gone now."

"You can't humbug me, Mark Robertson! You're laughing in your sleeve because you think Frank got the best of me in that fight. But let me tell you I would have come out on top if Professor Strong hadn't come up and stopped us."

"Maybe you would not have come out on top," said Frank, dryly, for his temper was rising. "I fancy I had the best of it by a good deal. Anyway, your teeth——"

"Oh, let that old quarrel drop," came from Darry, who had caught the latter part of the conversation. "We're out for a good time, and let us have it."

"I'm willing to let it drop," said Mark, readily.

"I wouldn't have said a word, only Hockley—" began Frank.

"That's it, blame everything on me!" howled the bully, his anger getting the better of him. "I knew that pretended friendliness of yours wouldn't last. You are all down on me and you know it. But I'll show you a trick or two before we're done—you see if I don't!"

Professor Strong had gone to the end of the car for a drink of water and to gaze for a moment out of the doorway. Now he returned to his seat near the boys, and the talk came to a sudden end.

CHAPTER III

OFF FOR JAMAICA

"HE is the same old Hockley," murmured Mark to Frank, when he got the chance. "His friendliness was all put on."

"No, I don't think that, exactly," returned Frank. "I think he meant well, but he's one of the kind who won't let matters rest. I suppose it galls him to think I had the better of that fight, and some day he'll try to square accounts."

"In that case, Frank, you'll have to be on guard."

"Oh, don't worry; I'll keep my eyes open."

As my old readers know, La Guayra is only a small seaport, located on a stretch of land between the water and the high cliffs of the mountains. It is a dirty, ill-smelling place, and nobody lives there who can help it.

"I'm glad we haven't to stop here long," said Sam. "It smells like dead fish and oil mixed. Where is the steamer?"

An hour later found them on board of the craft,

an old-fashioned, tub sort of an affair named the *Chester*. She was an English boat devoted to the carrying trade between Trinidad, La Guayra, Kingston, and other points in the Caribbean Sea. Her captain was named Jason Sudlip, and he was a burly fellow, with a reddish face and black, piercing eyes.

"This boat ought to be called the *Chestnut*, instead of the *Chester*," remarked Darry, after he and the others had made a tour of inspection. "She's old enough to vote twice over. It's a wonder she hasn't gone to pieces long ago."

"Better not let the captain hear you talk like that," came from Sam. "We're lucky to get passage, so I was told. Steamers for Kingston and Havana are scarce."

"She is no such steamer as brought us down from New York, that's sure," put in Mark. "But knocking around as we are, we'll have to take what comes."

Their baggage had been brought on board and placed in their staterooms, and now the boys started in to make themselves comfortable, for the journey to Kingston would last about four days, and that to Havana three or four days more.

"What a stuffy hole this is," grunted Hockley, as

he gazed around the stateroom which had been assigned to him and Darry. "I don't see why the professor didn't pick out something worth living in. I can't sleep here."

"The professor said he had done the best he could, Jake."

"It's a beastly shame. This ain't fit for a mule to stall in."

"Oh, it isn't as bad as that. However, if you don't like it, you can complain to the professor."

Hockley would not do this and only continued to growl, until Darry grew so sick of hearing him that he escaped to the deck and there joined Sam and Frank.

"No two ways about it, Glummy has got a bilious attack," he announced. "He has had the sore head ever since we got to Caracas. Now he's kicking about the stateroom; says it isn't fit for a mule. Of course it isn't the finest in the world, but it's not as bad as that."

"It's a pity he is in such a humor," returned Sam. "And after everything was going so swimmingly, too. But I think I can explain it, in part at least."

"Then do so by all means, Beans," cried Darry and Frank, in a breath.

"I learned it by accident, when we came on board. I picked up part of a letter Hockley had torn up. I didn't know it was his at the time. It read to the effect that he couldn't have any more money at present, that Mr. Hockley was going to send the funds direct to Professor Strong. Jake evidently wanted money very much, and his father's refusal to give him some has upset him."

"That would do it, for Glummy always wants to cut a dash with his rocks," said Darry. "But he needn't take it out on us. I've got to room with him, unfortunately, but I shan't stand much of his cutting up."

As only three staterooms were to be had, Amos Strong had taken Sam in with himself and given another room to Frank and Mark. This just suited the two New York boys and they at once proceeded to make themselves as comfortable as the limited means permitted.

As the steamer was a small one and carried but few passengers, the help was also limited, and both the table and the staterooms were looked after by a tall, gaunt negro who rejoiced in the name of January Jones. The colored man was from Alabama and had shipped some months before. He was

thoroughly good natured, but one would never have guessed this from his face, which was usually as solemn as that of an owl.

"Be pleased to help yo' young gen'men wid yo' things," he announced, on presenting himself. "Do whatever yo' wants me to, sah."

"Thanks, but everything is about done," said Mark, who was addressed. Then he added: "Are you the porter?"

"Yes, sah, I'se de portah an' de waitah, sah."

"Two in one, eh? All right, George, we'll call on you later."

"Yes, sah—January Jones, sah."

"January Jones!" came from Frank. "That's an odd name. How did they come to name you January?"

"Ole massa did dat, sah—af' de wah, sah. Called me January because I was boahn in July, sah—said eberything was goin' wrong, wid that wah comin' on, an' things was turnin' 'round, sah."

At this Mark and Frank laughed outright.

"He was certainly a humorist, January," said Mark.

"Massa was a cotton plantah, sah—had a big

plantation on de ribber, sah. He's dead an' gone now, an' so is de missus."

"Well, then he was a planter as well as a humorist."

"Didn't nebber hear him say nuffin 'bout bein' in de humorist business, sah. But I was a little piccaninny dem days an' didn't know nuffin. Den I can't do nuffin for' you?"

"Not now, but we'll want you later," answered Mark, and January Jones shuffled off to call on the others.

"That's what I call a character," said Mark, after another laugh. "I reckon we can have some fun with January before this trip comes to an end."

Early in the morning the *Chester* left the harbor of La Guayra, with its many ships of all nations and its strange native fishing smacks. The boys and the professor stood at the rail and remained there until land became a mere blur in the distance.

"Farewell to Venezuela!" cried Sam, taking off his hat and making a profound bow. "Our trip was full of pleasure and full of excitement. May the coming trip please us equally."

"And be less full of peril," added Professor

Strong. "Too much excitement is worse than none at all."

"Oh, Professor, we've got to have some excitement," said Darry. "Now that it is all over I think everything was just about right."

"But I am under orders to bring you back home safe and sound," returned Amos Strong, with a peculiar smile. "And how can I do that if you insist on placing your head in the lion's mouth?"

"I haven't seen a lion yet," said Darry, with a vacant stare. "Where is he and where's his mouth?"

There was a general laugh, in which even the professor joined, for he loved a joke as well as any of them.

"You know I was speaking metaphorically, Dartworth. Of course I cannot look ahead, but I sincerely trust that you do what you can to keep out of danger in the future. If you do not, I'll have to call this tour off and take you all home."

"We'll be as good as mice watched by a cat," put in Frank, and this caused another laugh; and then the subject was changed and soon the group separated, each person bent on making himself comfortable in his own way.

But the *Chester* was not a comfortable ship, as Mark and Frank soon learned by a tour from stem to stern. And they also learned another thing,—that the captain, Jason Sudlip, was anything but an agreeable man.

“Hi, you, I don’t allow passengers in there,” they heard the captain cry, while they were peering into the chart room. “You boys must stay where you belong while you are on this ship.”

“We weren’t going to touch anything, Captain,” replied Mark, pleasantly, although he did not like the way in which he was being addressed.

“Oh, I know boys—into everything they have no business in,” retorted Captain Sudlip. “I’ve had them on board before. You’ll have to stay where you belong.” And he slammed and locked the door of the chart room in their faces.

“He’s real sweet, isn’t he?” said Frank, as they walked to the saloon deck. “I’m glad I don’t work under him. I wouldn’t be a hand on this steamer for ten dollars a day. I’ll be glad when our trip on her is ended.”

Professor Strong had noticed the captain’s harsh manner to those under him, but he said nothing, for in his travels he had met many a captain just as

harsh and some of them had been positively brutal.

Dinner was served at five o'clock, and when the boys came to the table with their hearty appetites—nobody had as yet had a chance to get seasick,—they looked at what was set before them by January Jones with dismay.

"This is awful!" whispered Darry to Sam. "This soup is regular dish-water."

"I can't eat such soup," returned Sam. "I hope the meat and vegetables are better."

"Sorry, sah, but it's de best de ship affords, sah," said January Jones, who saw that they were not suited. "De cap'n am a werry close buyer, sah," he added, in a lower voice. "Can't git nuffin cheap enough."

The meat was tough and there was hardly sufficient to go around, while the vegetables, brought on board the day before, were far from fresh. The bread was also poor, and the coffee of the lowest grade. For dessert there was a rice pudding which, according to Darry, "was just like a chunk of dirty rubber."

Professor Strong saw that the boys were on the

point of open rebellion, but he shook his head at them.

“Make the best of it,” he said. “I will see the captain about it later and find out if the service cannot be improved.”

January Jones heard the words, and they made the solemn-looking colored man grin. “Dat’s right, sah,” he whispered. “I hopes yo’ do kick, sah. But yo’ wants to be careful, sah. De man wot kicked on de las’ trip got it hot an’ heaby from de cap’n, sah.”

“So there has been trouble before?”

“Yes, sah, lots ob trouble. But please don’t say I tole yo’, sah. De cap’n would mos’ kill me if he found it out,” went on January Jones. “De cap’n am a hard one, an——”

The colored man did not finish, for he had turned to leave the table, and now he found Captain Sudlip close behind him. He gave one startled look and dove for the door leading to the cook’s galley. The captain followed, and one disappeared directly after the other.

CHAPTER IV

A TALK ABOUT A MEAL

"THERE'LL be music now," whispered Frank to Darry. "That captain is a tartar if ever there was one."

The dessert had already been brought on, so January Jones was not called on to do additional waiting and he did not re-appear. The boys were soon finished and went again to the deck, leaving Professor Strong to interview the master of the steamer.

It was a disagreeable duty he had to perform, but Amos Strong was too old a traveler, and had seen too much of life, to hesitate concerning his course of action. Being unable to find the captain, he hailed the first mate.

"I wish to see the captain at once," he said. "Where is he?"

The mate did not know, and sent a deck hand to

hunt him up. It was a good quarter of an hour before the master of the *Chester* put in an appearance.

"What is it you want?" demanded Jason Sudlip, harshly and there was a gleam in his eyes which was far from pleasant.

"I wish to complain to you, Captain Sudlip, of the food furnished to our party."

"What's the matter with it?"

"Everything is the matter with it. In the first place it is very poor in itself and in the second place it is miserably cooked. To-day's dinner is the poorest which has been served to our party since we left the United States, and that is several months ago."

"Humph! I heard you trying to raise a row at the table. According to my way of thinking the food is all right, and so is the cooking. Is that all you want to see me about?"

"That is all, and it is quite enough. I do not propose to stand it. I paid for first-class accommodations for myself and for those with me, and I shall expect such accommodations in the future. If they are not forthcoming as soon as we get to Kingston I shall lodge a complaint against you and sue

to recover, even if I have to hold myself and your ship there to do it."

At this announcement Captain Sudlip's eyes almost bulged out of his head with rage.

"Ha! do you threaten me?" he roared. "That's the way of all Yankees—think they can ride right over everybody that comes along. You can't ride over me!"

"I won't argue the point," returned Professor Strong, calmly. "You heard what I said, and I am a man who always keeps his word. I once met a fellow of your stripe at Nassau—Captain Renfaw, of the *Queen Mary*—perhaps you know him. He tried the same game of poor food and it cost the owners of the ship about sixty pounds in court—and the money came out of Captain Renfaw's salary. Unless there is a better service I shall treat you exactly as I did Renfaw."

With this remark Amos Strong swung around on his heel and sauntered off. Captain Sudlip stood for a second glaring at him, and seemed on the point of talking back. Then he drew his lips tightly together and walked to his private cabin.

The professor said nothing to the boys about what had taken place, but they all knew that he had "laid

down the law " by the way the captain acted whenever he came near them. They saw nothing of January Jones until the day following.

By nightfall Hockley was taken seasick, and a little later Sam and Mark were also suffering. None of the attacks, however, was severe, and Frank and Darry escaped entirely.

" We got cleaned out when we came down here," said Darry, with a grin. " My! but I'll never forget that dose. I thought sure I was going to turn inside out! "

" Poor Hockley didn't get a chance to boast this trip," replied Frank. " He was the first one taken."

By morning all felt fairly well, and everybody appeared at the table but Hockley, who was suffering from a headache.

" Now we'll see what's what! " whispered Frank. " This certainly looks encouraging," and he pointed to the clean tablecloth and the neat piles of bread and pats of butter.

Breakfast seemed a long time in coming, but when at last it did arrive it was quite a fair meal. The quantity was not extravagant, but what there was of it was fairly well cooked, and the coffee proved of a much better grade, greatly to the professor's satis-

faction, for like many old-time travelers, he was a great coffee drinker. Nothing was said about the improvement in the food, but many a sly wink was given and returned across the board.

While the boys were eating they saw that January Jones was unusually silent. The negro had a bit of court-plaster on his forehead and one side of his jaw seemed slightly swollen.

"It looks to me as if January had been in a fight," remarked Sam, when the crowd found itself on deck. "Do you imagine that brute of a captain attacked him?"

"I shouldn't be surprised," returned Mark. "He is a very easy-going, mild-mannered darkey, and a fellow like Captain Sudlip would just take pleasure in brow-beating him."

"But isn't it against the marine rules to strike a man like that?" questioned Frank.

"I guess captains often take the law into their own hands," said Darry. "They can put in a complaint of mutiny, or something like that, and a sailor, or other ship's hand, has no show."

The day had started in bright and clear, but by ten o'clock it began to grow misty, and soon a driz-

zling rain was falling and they were compelled to seek the shelter of the cabin.

“I think we may as well improve our time by having a talk about Jamaica,” said Professor Strong. “We shall only stop for one day at Kingston—unless something unforeseen happens—but it won’t hurt to know something of this English possession.”

He had his map handy, and placing it on the wall he sat down in front of it, and the boys ranged close alongside.

“As you can readily see,” began the professor, “Jamaica is an island located in the Caribbean Sea directly north of Colombia in South America and south of the island of Cuba. It is oval in shape and is about one hundred and fifty miles long by fifty miles wide. Can any of you name a State at home of about that size?”

There was a few seconds of silence.

“If I am not mistaken New Jersey is just a little larger than that,” answered Mark.

“You are right Robertson, the general length and the general width are about the same, although New Jersey contains more square miles than Jamaica.

The island has a ridge of high hills running east and west, called the Blue Mountains, and from these hills spring over half a dozen small streams which flow into the sea."

"Can you sail on the rivers?" came from Darry.

"On only a few, Crane, the others contain too many rapids and waterfalls. The deepest stream is the Black River, which is used by small boats for perhaps twenty-five or thirty miles. I once had an adventure on that river, so I am not likely to forget it."

"Oh, tell us the story!" cried Frank, eagerly. He always thought a "geography lesson" awfully dry.

"It is soon told," answered Professor Strong, with a good natured smile. "I had been out hunting and had slipped on a steep rock and twisted my ankle. I went down to the river and there discovered a rowboat. No one was at hand from whom I could hire the boat and I could not walk around looking up the owner. So I determined to risk taking the boat, and jumping in I shoved off and began to row down to the town, two miles away. I had hardly gotten quarter of a mile when I heard a shouting and two old Englishmen came

running down the river bank, yelling wildly. They, too, had been out gunning, and before I could come back and explain one of them aimed his gun at me and fired."

"And were you hit?" asked several of the boys together.

"No, fortunately his aim was poor and the charge passed over my head. Then I rowed to shore in a hurry, and after a good deal of trouble explained matters. They told me that they had had their boat stolen by negroes three days before and in the darkness took me for one of the negroes. I felt like giving them a piece of my mind for shooting at me, but as it was their boat I let the matter drop. But I never borrowed another boat without permission."

"I'd had 'em locked up," came from Hockley, who had just joined the group.

"Well, I did not. Now to get back to Jamaica. The mouths of the numerous rivers afford good harbors, but the best of the shelters for ships is the bay toward the south-east, upon which is situated Kingston, the capital. The total population of the island is about six hundred and fifty thousand, only a very small part of that being white people."

"It's the best of the West Indies belonging to England, isn't it?" questioned Sam.

"Yes. It used to belong to Spain. It was discovered by Columbus, on his second voyage, in 1494, and it was taken under Spanish rule fifteen years later. In 1655 Oliver Cromwell sent out an expedition which captured the island, and it was ceded to England later on. Since that time there has been more or less trouble with the negroes, but at present the island is at rest."

"And what do the people do for a living?" asked Darry.

"They raise sugar and coffee principally, and also some fruit. The country is also becoming something of a health resort, the climate, especially among the hills, being fine."

"I've often heard of Jamaica rum," said Hockley.

"Yes, the island produces more of that than is good for the people at large," answered the professor. "It also exports large quantities of logwood, and the price received is, at present, very good."

"Tell us about your hunting trips in Jamaica," said Frank, after a pause, during which Amos

Strong pointed out several of the important towns on the map; and a long talk on hunting followed which did not come to an end until the gong rang for dinner. Nothing had been brought down in the forests of Jamaica but birds—for there are no wild animals worth mentioning—but the professor had a manner of telling his “yarns” which was exceedingly captivating.

The midday meal served was about on a par with the breakfast. There was no more than was absolutely necessary, but the quality was far above that of the day previous and the cook had taken pains with the preparation of the food. The captain did not show himself, and even January Jones hardly spoke a word.

“I hope you didn’t get into trouble on our account, January,” observed Sam, when he got the chance.

“De cap’n am a werry hard man, sah,” replied the negro, and that was all he would say.

“Angry, is he?”

The negro nodded solemnly and walked away.

“I think we’ll hear more of this,” said Darry, and he was right.

It grew dark early in the afternoon and the rain

kept them in the cabin, where the boys started in to amuse themselves in various ways.

"It's small fun on board of a ship in a storm," said Sam. "Makes me feel like a chicken boxed up in a hen-house."

"Really?" returned Darry, dryly. "Now I never was a chicken in a hen-house, so I don't know how——" and then he broke off short and dodged, as Sam moved as if to throw a book at his head.

"It certainly is dead slow——" remarked Frank, when a sudden hissing stopped him. The hissing was followed by a roar as of an explosion and before they could realize it the cabin began to fill with steam.

"Gracious, the boiler must have burst!" ejaculated Mark.

"Boiler burst!" came from the others.

"We had better get out on deck, boys!" called Professor Strong. "Something is certainly very much wrong."

He had scarcely spoken when there came another roar and worse hissing. A yell went up from some other passengers and immediately there was wild confusion on all sides.

"Oh, Professor, are we going down?" cried

Hockley in terror, as he clutched Professor Strong's arm.

"I hope not, Jacob," was the reply. "Come, we will get to the deck and provide ourselves with life preservers."

But to reach the deck through that cloud of steam was by no means easy. Hockley was frantic and began to yell for help. In the meantime Professor Strong and Frank reached a number of life preservers and passed some to the others. At last they found themselves outside on the wet and dark deck, wondering what was going to happen next.

CHAPTER V

THE DEFENSE OF JANUARY JONES

"WE'LL all be drowned, I know we will!"

The remark came from Hockley. His teeth chattered so that he could scarcely speak.

"If there is any real danger I should think the captain would have the boats lowered," said Mark, who, now that the first scare was over, was more calm than any of the other boys.

"Perhaps it is not as bad as we anticipated," said the professor.

"Tie this life preserver on me, will you?" asked Hockley of Sam. He already had one preserver around his waist and now wanted this on his breast.

"All right," replied Sam, and did as requested.

In the meantime all listened for the sound of another explosion. Would it come, and if it did, would it send them skyhigh? Certainly it was a moment of terrible suspense.

"I—I know we'll go up," chattered Hockley. "And we're ever so far from land too!"

But they did not go up, nor did anything more in the nature of an explosion occur. The hissing of steam continued for fully five minutes and then stopped as suddenly as it had begun.

"I imagine the worst is over," said Professor Strong, after a painful silence. "Unless I am mistaken that accident was nothing worse than the ripping open of some steam pipes. But it may have cost the life of a fireman, coal heaver, or engineer. If you will all remain here I will investigate."

They promised to stay where they were and he left them, to be gone the best part of quarter of an hour. In the meantime quietness was restored on board, and some of the passengers went back to the cabin, which was now free of steam.

"It was as I surmised," said the professor. "Two pipes burst and let out an immense amount of steam. One of the firemen had his leg scalded and an engineer had his left hand badly lacerated. They are now repairing the damage done, and they say that by morning we will be able to steam along the same as usual."

"I'm glad to know it's no worse," observed

Frank, while Hockley wiped the cold perspiration from his forehead. "But it's queer the pipes should burst. They must be old."

"The engineer says he told Captain Sudlip about the pipes needing repairs before we left La Guayra. But the captain put him off and told him that he would have the repairs made at Havana."

"If that's the case then that fireman and that engineer will have it in for him," was Mark's comment.

"And they ought to have it in for him," came from Frank. "Those men might have been steamed to death, and we might have been blown up in the bargain."

"Just what I say," added Sam.

The rain soon cleared off and that evening the countless stars came out to brighten up the view of the sea. The boys made themselves easy on the deck, taking in the scene, the single exception being Hockley, who sat close to a cabin light, reading a novel he had picked up at a bookstall in La Guayra.

"Did you see that novel Glummy is reading?" said Sam to Frank, as he drew up his chair.

"I didn't notice particularly. What is it, something deep?" And Frank smiled.

“Very deep,” went on Sam, disgustedly. “The title is ‘Pete Prankley, the Sassiest Boy in Saw-town; Or, Out for a Hundred Laughs a Day.’ Did you ever hear of such rot? I don’t see how Jake can read it.”

“That’s on a level with another book he was reading—at the hotel in Caracas. That was called ‘Gold Nose Hank, the Mine Discoverer; Or, The Whoop-Up at Stampede Hollow.’ Just for fun I looked through the book and made a note of the things that happened. Gold Nose Hank shot down three Indians, two road robbers and one government detective. His enemies fired forty-six shots at him but never touched him. He located nine gold mines, said to be worth fifteen million dollars, and saved the life of the girl five times, once from a stampede of cattle, once from the Indians, once from a road robber, and twice from drowning in a river which he afterward forded without getting his cartridge belt wet. And all that for ten cents.”

At this Sam burst into a merry laugh. “That author believed in giving his reader his money’s worth, didn’t he?”

“Glummy seems to have got a mania for that sort of a story lately. The professor once took a book

away from him and burnt it up. But now Glummy puts the books out of sight as soon as he sees the professor coming."

"If he keeps on he'll be wanting to follow in the footsteps of Gold Nose Hank or Pete Prankley," said Mark, who had listened to the talk. "If he does it will get him into trouble. He will find—listen!"

Mark stopped short, and all of the boys listened. From the forward deck of the steamer came a cry, as of sudden alarm. Silence followed.

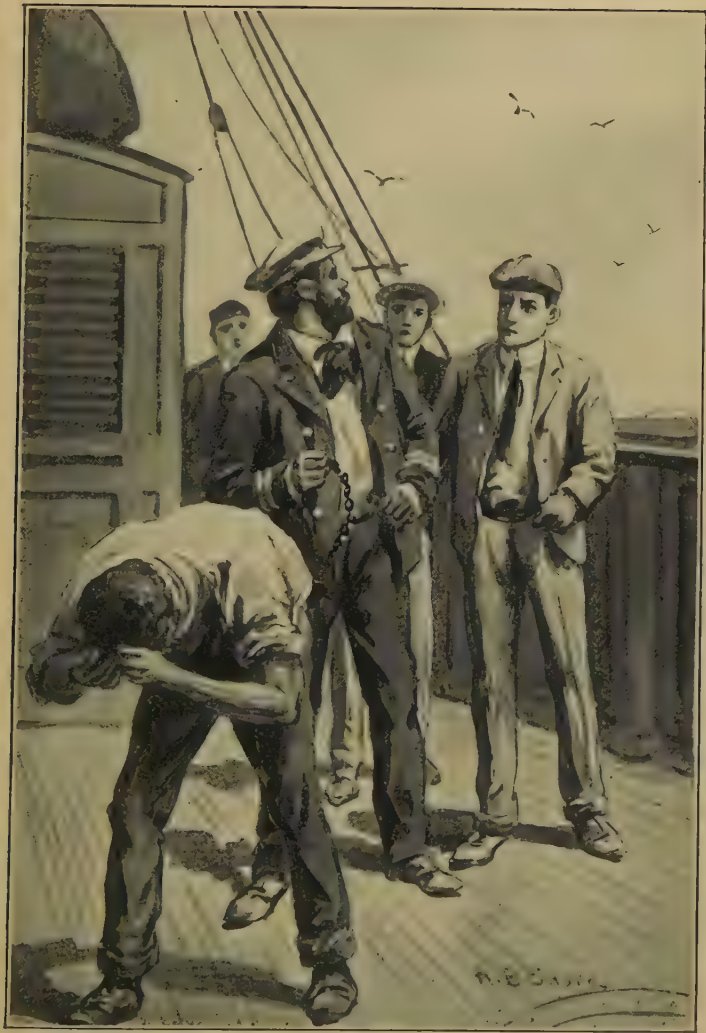
"That was queer," said Sam. "It sounded to me like January Jones' voice."

"It was January," returned Frank. "He's in some sort of trouble. Come on and see what it is."

The three boys rushed forward, followed by Darry, the professor having gone to his stateroom to change his coat. At first they could not find the colored man, but presently located him near the fore-castle. Beside him stood Captain Sudlip, a bit of an iron chain in his hand.

"That will teach you a lesson," the captain of the *Chester* was saying. "You've needed it ever since you came on board."

To this January Jones made no answer. He was



"I think it's a shame for you to strike this man." — *Page 47.*

wiping the blood from his nose and from a cut on his left hand.

"The captain has been striking that negro," whispered Sam. "It is an outrage and I mean to tell him so."

"Don't do it, Beans," cried Mark, catching him by the arm. "You'll only get yourself into trouble."

But Sam would not listen. He was ordinarily a quiet, studious boy, but now his stern New England sense of justice was aroused, and tearing himself loose he hurried up and confronted the master of the steamer.

"I think it's a shame for you to strike this man," he said, in a loud, clear voice. "I know you are the captain but I don't think you have a right to abuse any of your crew."

At this frank speech Jason Sudlip stared in open-mouthed astonishment. For the moment he fancied he had not heard aright.

"Why—er—what——" he began, and then his eyes blazed with sudden fury. "Get out of here!" he roared. "Get out, I say! If you don't I'll knock you down!"

His advance was so threatening that Sam put up

his hands to defend himself. But he did not back away, and Captain Sudlip stopped when directly in front of the lad.

"Did you hear me?" he stormed. "I want you to get where you belong. I'll treat this nigger as I please. By Jove, I think you need a good licking too!" And he raised the chain as if to strike.

But now Darry ranged up alongside of Sam. "If you fight, you'll have to fight me too," he declared. "He said it was a shame for you to abuse January Jones and it is. No decent captain would act as you are acting on this trip."

If possible this declaration made Jason Sudlip more furious than ever. He was naturally of a vindictive nature and he glared at the boys as if he would like to "chew 'em" up.

Mark and Frank were not long in advancing as Darry had done, and the sight of the four boys, with their determined faces, caused Captain Sudlip to pause again. He glanced around, but in the semi-darkness of that portion of the deck no one was visible but the boys, January Jones and himself.

"Don't you know you are carrying matters with a high hand, dictating to me on my own ship?" he demanded, in a slightly milder tone.

"I am not dictating to you," replied Sam. "But if this man needs protection and I can aid him I will, that's as sure as you stand there. I don't know much about the sea, but I think the time has gone by when a captain can treat his crew like a lot of slaves."

"Dat's right, I ain't no slabe no moah," came from January Jones, who was beginning to pick up a little courage, now he saw he had so many to side with him.

"You keep quiet!" stormed the captain, shaking his fist at the colored man. "I'll settle this with you at another time," and then January Jones slunk back, fearful that he had "put his foot into it" worse than ever.

"Captain, I can't see why we can't settle this little affair in a friendly way," said Mark, after an awkward pause. "We don't want any trouble. If you'll only treat that colored fellow as he should be treated, and continue to serve us with decent meals, there won't be any cause for——"

"I don't want any preaching from a boy!" interrupted the captain. "I know my business and I want you to mind yours."

"All right, we will," came from Darry. "But

just the same, we are going to keep an eye on you so long as we remain on board. And if you do anything more that the law doesn't allow you'll hear from us; isn't that so, fellows?"

A chorus of assent followed.

"I won't talk to you further," growled Captain Sudlip, and turning on his heel he started off. His direction was toward January Jones, and that individual lost no time in getting out ahead and disappearing to parts unknown.

"He is a brute and no mistake," was Sam's comment, when they were once more left to themselves. "I believe he would have half killed that darkey if we hadn't come up."

"Don't worry but that the captain has it in for you," came from Frank. "And in for Darry, too."

"I guess he'd have it in for all of us—if he got the chance," said Mark. "But we mustn't give him the chance. In the future, while on shipboard, we had better keep together." And on this the boys agreed.

When they returned to where the professor was sitting he asked them where they had gone so suddenly.

"Oh, we took a walk forward," said Sam, care-

lessly, and then to stop further questioning asked Professor Strong how far he thought they were on their journey and when they would arrive at Kingston.

Hockley had finished his so-styled humorous book, and now came out to listen to what the crowd might have to say. But he was not interested and soon began to yawn.

"I'd rather sleep than sit out here gazing at nothing but stars and water," he said, and shuffled off to his stateroom.

It was about an hour later when the professor and the boys also retired. Mark and Frank who, as told before, roomed together, had just undressed when there came a slight knock on the door.

"Who is it?" asked Mark.

"It's me, sah," came in the low voice of January Jones. "I dun stole down heah widout de cap'n knowing it."

"Oh!" Mark opened the door several inches. "What can we do for you now, January?"

"Nuffin, sah, thank yo', sah. I jess come down heah to thank yo' fo' what yo' done fo' me, sah. It was werry kind, dat was, sah. An' I thought I'd tell you dat I ain't a-gwine to stay on dis ship no

longer dan I can help, sah. It ain't good fo' my constitution, sah, no, sah!"

"That's right, it isn't," laughed Frank. "But you'll have to stay on board until you strike land. Is that all?"

"Yes, sah. Thought I couldn't go to sleep widout thankin' yo' sah, nohow. Please tell dem other gents, will yo', sah?"

"We will."

"Thank yo', sah, much obliged, sah!"

And with these words January Jones sneaked off as noiselessly as he had come.

CHAPTER VI

AN INTERRUPTION TO SIGHT-SEEING

Two days later the *Chester* slipped into the fine harbor at Kingston and dropped anchor. It was cloudy, but by noon the sun broke forth and the boys had a chance to look at the shipping, which is fairly extensive. As usual in West Indian ports, the flags of many nationalities were flying, and the scene was full of interest.

Since the boys had stood up so bravely in defense of January Jones they had seen but little of Captain Sudlip, he evidently making it a point to avoid them. And they also saw but little of January Jones, for the negro was assigned to other work and a strange hand placed to wait on the table and care for their rooms. The service all around was fairly good, but, as Darry expressed it, "nothing to brag about."

"Are we going to get a chance to stretch our legs on shore?" questioned Sam, as he gazed over the rail at the narrow and crowded streets of the town.

"The professor has got to find that out," said Frank, who had just been speaking to Amos Strong. "He says he paid our passage right through to Havana, so we can't bid good-bye to Captain Sudlip just yet."

A little later Professor Strong joined them with the information that the *Chester* would remain in Kingston harbor until the following day until three o'clock.

"Then we can take quite a look around," said Mark. "Are there any points of interest to visit?"

"A few only. You see, England has tried hard to make something of the island, but as yet there are too many negroes here to suit Americans. But we will take it in for what it is worth."

It was decided that they should put up at the Queen's Hotel over night and they so notified Captain Sudlip.

"All right, do as you please," he growled. "But it won't take anything off your passage money."

"I did not expect it would," replied Professor Strong, coldly.

They were soon ashore and walking up the narrow and dirty street leading from the quay. On

either side were big warehouses with here and there a low drinking resort, around which hung sailors of many nationalities and crowds of negroes.

"This is not very inviting," was Sam's comment. "It smells almost as bad as at La Guayra."

"It is not so bad further away from the docks."

They soon reached the hotel, a comfortable resort with large shade trees in the courtyard and a fountain, and here Professor Strong secured accommodations for all.

"Kingston contains about fifty thousand inhabitants," said the professor, after they had secured a large carriage in which to drive around. "It was established about two hundred years ago, after the neighboring town of Port Royal had been destroyed by earthquake. Now Port Royal has been rebuilt. It lies on the other side of the harbor, but Kingston is the main city, and nearly all the foreign commerce passes through this port."

"Have they any railroads?"

"When I was here last they had a railroad about ten miles long, running from here to Spanish Town, in the interior. The lay of the land is not favorable to railroads."

"I knew some sick folks who came to Jamaica for their health," said Hockley. "A man and his son. Both had consumption."

"Yes, invalids come here in plenty, and there are several hotels up in the hills built especially for their benefit."

They were soon at the principal square of the city, called the Parade. Here were numerous shops, as well as a barracks for the soldiers, a church, theater, and other public buildings. The Parade was well kept, quite in contrast to the streets through which they had been passing.

It was a relief, when they returned to the hotel, to find a first-class meal awaiting them, something that "topped clean over old Sudlip's lobsouse," as Darry put it, borrowing a favorite sailor's expression.

It was decided to take a run up to Spanish Town the next morning. They could get a train about ten o'clock, and that would give them ample time to look around and get back before three, the time when the *Chester* would set sail.

All of the boys were up bright and early on the following morning with the exception of Hockley, who snored away until Professor Strong called him.

"I don't want to get up," he grumbled. "Nothing to see in this dead hole." Yet when dressed he joined the others in a trip to several public buildings, where an English official kindly showed them around.

Ten o'clock found them at the depot, waiting for the train which was to take them to Spanish Town, and here they discovered that the time table had been changed and the train would not leave until half an hour later.

"But we can get back before three even so," announced Amos Strong, after studying the schedule. "I fancy none of you want to return to the *Chester* until it's necessary."

They waited around and at last the little locomotive, with its three coaches rolled in. As it came to a stop they heard a yell, and looking around, saw January Jones coming toward them on a dead run.

"Hello! what does he want?" exclaimed Mark. "Something is up, that's certain."

"Stop! stop!" called out the negro, as soon as he was within speaking distance. "Doan yo' go fo' to take dat train, less yo' want to lose de ship!"

"Lose the ship?" queried Professor Strong.

"What do you mean? We expect to be back before three o'clock."

"De ship am gwine to sail at one o'clock, sah."

"One o'clock!" came from all of the others. And then the boys looked at the professor inquiringly.

"Captain Sudlip told me he would sail at three o'clock," said Professor Strong. "I asked him twice to make sure."

"I 'spect he did, sah, but I heard him tell de mate dat dey must sail promptly at one o'clock, sah—dat he wouldn't wait fo' nobody, sah."

"It's a trick to leave us behind!" burst out Mark. "He has our money and that is all he cares."

"But he told me three o'clock," persisted the professor. "Although I have no witness to that fact!" he added, suddenly, a light breaking in on him.

"Then that is where he has us foul!" came from Frank. "It's a good thing January told us this," he continued, and gave the negro a grateful look.

"Tole yo' I would do sumt'ing if I got de chance," said the negro, with a grin.

"All aboard!" called the train porter.

"We are not going," answered Professor Strong; and a minute later the train was off.

“Yo’ see it was dis way,” continued January Jones, as they walked away from the station. “I heard one ob yo’ young gen’men tell de udder ’bout gitting back befo’ three o’clock. Den when I heard what Cap’n Sudlip said to de mate I knowed sum-t’ing was wrong. So I made up my mind to dun tole yo.’ I went to de hotel fust an’ dey tole me to come heah.”

“We’ll not forget your kindness,” said Professor Strong. “It was certainly a mean trick on Captain Sudlip’s part and I shall tell him so. Of course if we had been left I could not have brought suit against him for damages, since I have no witness to prove that he said he would sail at three o’clock.”

“Tell yo’, sah, I’s mighty sick ob workin’ fo’ dat man, sah,” observed January, with a shake of his woolly head. “I’d leave de ship heah, only dis ain’t much ob a place.”

“No, I would advise you to remain until you reach Havana,” answered Professor Strong. “I have a number of friends in that city and perhaps I can get you something to do there.”

This pleased January Jones greatly, and he promised to do what he could for them so long as they were together.

As there was nothing much to do at present, they walked back to the hotel, where they procured dinner. In the meantime the negro, who had been sent ashore on an errand, hurried back to the steamer with all speed.

At quarter to one o'clock Captain Sudlip came on deck and looked around him anxiously. He was all ready to sail and so far had seen nothing of his five passengers. He gazed ashore but not one of them was in sight.

"I've won the game this time," he muttered to himself. "And they can't prove anything either. It was as slick as any Yankee move. They'll be mad enough when they realize how I have outwitted them. And I've got the passage money safe in the cabin. Let me see, by dropping them behind I clear just about twenty pounds. I can tell the owners that they paid their way only as far as Kingston and they will never know differently."

As the minutes went by he looked at his watch nervously. Ten minutes to one and no one in sight—five minutes. He called to the first mate.

"All ready to sail?"

"Aye, aye, sir," was the answer. "But I haven't seen anything of those Americans."

“Well, it’s their own fault if they don’t come aboard in time. I shall not wait for them.”

“Didn’t think you would, sir,” answered the mate, but in such a low voice that Captain Sudlip did not hear him.

At one minute to one the lines were cast off and as a distant bell tolled the hour the *Chester* began to move from the harbor. Standing near the pilot house Captain Sudlip continued to gaze ashore. But those he was fearful of seeing did not show themselves and presently he heaved a sigh of relief and satisfaction. Half an hour later Kingston Harbor and Jamaica itself were left behind and the *Chester* stood boldly out into the Caribbean Sea.

“Dumped ’em!” said the captain to himself, with a smile of intense satisfaction. “That will teach ’em a lesson. They can’t ride over me!” And then he added, after a pause, “Now I’ve got that nigger to myself, won’t I just teach him a lesson? He won’t be able to stand when I get through with him!”

CHAPTER VII

THE JOKE ON CAPTAIN SUDLIP

BUT were our friends left behind, as Captain Sudlip so fondly hoped? Let us go back and see.

It was light-hearted Darry, always ready for a joke, who offered the suggestion, while they were eating dinner at the Queen's Hotel.

"Say!" he exclaimed, suddenly, thumping the table in his excitement. "I've got a scheme for paying Captain Sudlip off for his meanness."

"Have you?" came from Professor Strong. "Even so, please don't pound the dishes from the table, Darry."

"Oh, excuse me, I forgot, sir. But really, the scheme is just the thing," went on Darry, earnestly.

"Then let us have it by all means," put in Frank. "I'm ready to do anything to get square with that man."

"My scheme is this: Let us try to get on board of the *Chester* on the sly. Then, when he is congratulating himself on leaving us behind we can

suddenly appear. I'll wager that will knock him silly."

"Hurrah; that's a go!" shouted Frank.

"A splendid plan," came from Sam.

"We'll have a tough job of it, getting on board without being seen," remarked Hockley, who was envious because he had not made the suggestion. "There is always somebody on deck, and that somebody will let the captain know of our coming."

"We must watch our chance," said Darry. "Anyway, it's worth trying, isn't it?"

All the boys agreed that it was, and Professor Strong could not help but smile at their enthusiasm. At once they made him promise to come into the plan, and he finally consented.

"But I am not going to sneak on board like a criminal," he said.

Soon they were down at the docks and here they met January Jones, who had just completed his errand. They took the negro into their confidence and he promised to come on deck and wave his big red bandanna handkerchief when the coast was clear.

Fortunately the plan worked with ease. Captain Sudlip was not dreaming of their return by half-

past twelve and they came on board seen only by January and one of the deck hands. This deck hand loved the captain no more than did the negro and he readily consented to remain silent concerning the American passengers.

Once on the steamer the party did not go to their staterooms but to a storeroom which January pointed out to them. It was a fairly comfortable spot, and here they remained until the steamer was under way. While sitting here the boys completed their plan, which made even Professor Strong smile broadly.

It was Darry who ventured forth first, showing himself when the harbor had been left many miles behind. He strolled on deck as coolly as possible, passing the captain without appearing to notice the latter.

Captain Sudlip was nearly dumfounded and stared as if he was looking at a ghost.

"Why—er—er," he stammered. "When—er—when did you come on board?"

"Not very long ago," answered Darry, coolly.

"Hum! Did you—er know—I mean, did you have a nice time?"

"First-class, although I should have liked to have

seen more." And then Darry added, before the captain could speak again: "Seen anything of the rest of our crowd?"

"No."

'Queer. They must be somewhere," and then Darry walked away, leaving Captain Sudlip staring after him.

"He must have left the others of his party," mused the master of the *Chester*. "Humph! Well, I won't treat him any too good. He'll find out that he can't boss me as the whole crowd did. If he gives me any lip I'll lock him in the brig."

Darry lost no time in retreating to the storeroom, where he told his story. Then Mark sauntered forth and passed the captain as the latter was entering the cabin.

This time Captain Sudlip's jaw dropped in chagrin as well as amazement. He was about to back away without a word, but Mark did not allow this.

"Well, Captain, I see you got away on time," he said, pleasantly. "Nothing like being prompt, eh?"

"Hum! Why—er—yes, I always sail on time," came back, in snappy tones. "I—er—when did you come aboard?"

“Not very long ago,” and then Mark added, as Darry had done: “Seen anything of the rest of our crowd?”

“Saw one,” was the short answer, and then Captain Sudlip passed on, his face full of perplexity and chagrin.

It was Frank he met next. The boy had a book in his hand and pretended to be reading. But on catching sight of the captain he sang out cheerily: “Hi, Captain Sudlip, have you seen anything of the rest of our crowd?”

“Some of ’em,” growled the master of the steamer, and walked in another direction, to encounter Sam, who came up to him with a handkerchief to his eyes.

“Oh, Captain, Captain Sudlip!” he exclaimed tearfully. “I—I’m in trouble.”

“Trouble?” demanded the captain, wrathfully. “What’s wrong?”

“Have you—have you seen anything—of—the—rest—of—our crowd?”

“Find out for yourself!” roared Captain Sudlip. “If this is a joke let me say I don’t stand for it!” And he rushed off for his private cabin.

Here he met Hockley, who had been waiting sev-

eral minutes to interview him. But he was no longer surprised and was on the point of passing when the youth held him up.

"I say, Captain," he began, "have you seen anything of the rest——"

"So you think you're going to make a monkey of me?" exploded Captain Sudlip, in a fury. "Think you are going to make laughing stock of me, do you? I won't stand it. How do you like that, you impudent rascal!"

"That" was a slap from his broad palm, which took poor Hockley fairly and squarely in the mouth and sent him on his back. The captain would have followed it up with more violence, but just then Professor Strong appeared.

"Stop that!" he commanded, sternly. "What right have you to touch this young man, sir?"

"He insulted me," answered the captain, but turned somewhat pale. "I won't be insulted on my own ship!" he added, doggedly.

"How did he insult you?"

"Didn't insult him," spluttered Hockley, rising. "I just asked him the question we agreed on,—if he had seen any of the rest of our crowd,—when he up and knocked me down."

"I—I won't argue the matter," interrupted Captain Sudlip. "I know your game. After this you can mind your own business and leave me alone."

"We will leave you alone," answered Professor Strong, as calmly as ever. "But first I am going to have my say. I know of your trick to leave us behind. You told me you would sail at three o'clock and then you changed the time to one o'clock."

"I did not, I——"

"We won't argue that matter. Fortunately we got back before one o'clock, so your little plan was nipped in the bud. We are going to sail with you as far as Havana, and you must treat us fairly while we are on board, otherwise I shall enter a complaint with the owners of this ship. And as for hitting this young man, you must apologize or I will back him up in having you arrested as soon as we reach port."

At these final words from Amos Strong the captain's face became a study. There was a look of rage and hate there, mingled with that of baffled cunning. He had gotten himself in a tight corner and he knew it. Two other passengers had seen the assault on Hockley, so there were witnesses enough



Down came the youth, head first. — *Page 145.*

to his misdeed. The talk had collected quite a crowd, including all the boys.

"So you think I ought to apologize?" he said, slowly.

"Yes, and you've got to do it, too!" put in Hockley, growing bolder, now he saw that Professor Strong was, for once, backing him up.

"You had no right to play a joke on me."

"I was only asking you a simple question."

"Hum! I know you! But I may have—er—been hasty in hitting you," went on Captain Sudlip, lamely. "And if I was I—er—apologize."

And with this he walked off, and did not show himself again until the next day.

"I reckon we got square," said Darry, later on, when they talked the matter over. "He'll be mad over this affair every time he thinks about it."

"It was all right enough for you fellows," grumbled Hockley, who was nursing a swollen lip.

"You didn't catch what I got."

"Why didn't you strike back, Glummy?" asked Mark.

"I didn't get the chance, the professor came up so quickly. Otherwise I would have wiped up the deck with him," blustered the would-be bully.

All of the others had their opinion about Hockley's ability to "wipe up the deck" with anybody, but they said nothing on that point, for certainly he had caught the bitter end of the joke.

"And now we've got to wait and see how Captain Sudlip treats us for the rest of the trip," said Mark, when the meeting broke up.

"And how he treats January Jones," said Darry. "Don't forget that poor fellow. My! what would Captain Sudlip do to him if he knew he was the one who had brought us the news?"

As might be expected, Jason Sudlip was in anything but a sweet temper during the days spent in making the run around the western end of Cuba to Havana. But he managed to steer clear of Professor Strong and his party, and the meals furnished, while not particularly good, were still such as to be above complaint.

It was on his crew that Captain Sudlip emptied his vials of wrath, and everybody caught it from the first mate down to January Jones and the cabin boy. This led to more than one quarrel, and before the *Chester* reached Havana half the help on board were on the verge of mutiny.

"I won't stand this," said the second mate. "If

the first mate won't make a complaint to the owners I will!"

"I do not blame you," answered Professor Strong, to whom he was speaking. "I think you have a clear case. If you wish it, I will write out a letter stating such facts as I know, and I will sign it, and so can the young men with me."

This offer was readily accepted, and when the *Chester* reached the harbor at Havana the second mate had the paper safe in his possession. He had talked the matter over with the others on the steamer and five men joined in making a complaint, not alone to the owners but also to the authorities. As a result Captain Sudlip was discharged by the owners of the steamer and the first mate became the commander, and the second mate became first. The mate was willing to keep January Jones, but the colored man remembered what Professor Strong had promised and went ashore to stay there.

CHAPTER VIII

SIGHT-SEEING IN HAVANA

THE boys watched the entrance into the harbor of Havana with interest, and as they approached the shore Professor Strong pointed out the various objects to which he wished to draw their attention.

"As you doubtless remember," he said, "during the War with Spain, in 1898, the city of Havana and several other cities in this neighborhood were blockaded for many months, so that it was next to impossible for the Spaniards to get any supplies from outside or to send any goods away from these ports. A number of vessels tried to run the blockade but nearly every one was captured, so that when the war was over our sailors had quite a lot of prize money coming to them."

"Is that Morro Castle?" asked Mark, pointing to a high fortification to the left of the harbor entrance.

"Yes, that is old Morro, and over on the right is Punta Castle, and beyond that is the Queen's

battery, a long fortification, which, as you can see, shelters the city itself from the sea. It was these fortifications, Morro, Punta, and the batteries to the west, that kept our ships at a distance during the blockade."

"I should like to visit Morro Castle," came from Sam.

"I think there will be no difficulty, although, you must remember, the American troops have now been withdrawn from the city and all of Cuba is now in the sole possession of the Cubans."

"Well, I guess they have a friendly feeling towards Yankees," came from Frank. "At least, they ought to have—we did so much to help them establish their freedom."

"The entrance to the harbor is about a mile from the harbor itself," went on Professor Strong, "and the city lies entirely on the west shore. Roughly speaking it is about a mile and a quarter square and contains about two hundred and forty thousand inhabitants. It is divided into the old city and the new, the former being within the old walls and being very much cluttered-up, and the latter being on the outskirts, where there are many fine buildings and summer residences. The harbor of Havana is

a place that no real American is likely to forget. Can you tell me why?"

"Because the battleship *Maine* was blown up here," came from one and another.

"Exactly, lads, and the blowing up of the *Maine* hastened on the war which resulted in Cuban liberty. I think we shall be able to see the spot where she sank, although the wreckage has been cleared away."

"I will show you the place," said one of the other passengers, and he pointed it out, not many rods from the shore. "I was here at the time," he went on. "The explosion was a very terrifying one, and broke a good deal of the glassware in the hotel at which I was stopping."

It was not until several hours later that they were allowed to land, after a Cuban Custom House official had passed their baggage. Professor Strong knew exactly where he wished to go, so there was no hesitation on that score.

"What narrow streets!" exclaimed Frank, as they passed along, the boys having elected to walk, in order to see the sights more fully. "Why they are no better than alleyways. This sidewalk is barely two feet wide."

"That is the way they used to build the streets,"

answered the professor with a laugh. "They know better now, and the new part of the city has some very broad and well-shaded highways, and also a great number of beautiful fountains."

"I don't see how wagons can pass each other—especially those long things they call *volantes*," came from Hockley.

"There used to be a regulation that carriages and carts could only pass through a street in one direction. I presume that is still in force in the old part of the town."

It was not long before they came to the main thoroughfare of Havana, with its quaint Spanish name of *Isabel Segunde*. Here, as the professor had said, were broad walks with numerous trees, and many fountains. Here was also located the hotel for which they were bound, a large three storied affair, with broad verandas upon all sides, and the usual courtyard, or *patio*, in the center.

"This is quite like home," declared Darry, as he looked around. "I have heard half a dozen folks speaking English. It's a good deal different from Caracas."

"The war made the difference, Dartworth. Before that time Havana was as foreign a town as one

could find on this side of the Atlantic, and that too although it is but a short journey from Florida."

The walk to the hotel had tired the party, and all of the boys, especially Hockley, were glad to rest in the *patio*, with its easy chairs and its cooling fountain. From a distance came the sounds of a band playing some popular air and the effect was most soothing.

"This is what I want," was the tall youth's comment. "Beats walking in the hot sun all to pieces."

"Tell you what, Glummy, the next time you walk you had better ride," said Frank, with a yawn.

There was a laugh at this "bull" and Hockley's face grew sour at once.

"How many times must I tell you not to call me 'Glummy'? I don't want it and I won't stand it."

"All right then, sit down—it's what we are here for," returned Frank. "But I'll try to remember," he added, as he saw that Hockley's anger was rising.

"See that you do," growled the big fellow, and then he dropped into an easy chair and soon fell asleep.

"He hasn't got over that affair on the steamer,"

whispered Mark. "He thinks one of us ought to have had that knock-down from Captain Sudlip."

"Oh, let us forget Captain Sudlip," said Frank. "I never want to see him again. He was too mean to live."

Professor Strong had to attend to several matters, including the getting of money on his letter of credit, and while he was gone the boys made themselves at home at the hotel. The quaint hostelry possessed every comfort and all would have been content to have remained there a long while.

But this was not to be. It had already been arranged that they should spend three days in sight-seeing in and around Havana, and then take side trips to Matanzas, Cardenas and other important cities not far away. After this they were to journey to Santiago, where they were to go out on horseback and view El Caney, San Juan, and other battlefields of the late war.

When the professor came in on the evening of the second day, he had a treat in store for them.

"I was passing the Tacon, the principal theater of Havana, when I saw an announcement of a celebrated Spanish dramatic company which is playing

there in a round of standard dramas. I would like you to see this playhouse, for its size and beauty is known all over the world, and so I purchased tickets for to-night's performance."

"Good!" came from Darry and Frank in a breath.

"I'd like to see a play first rate," said Mark. "What is it?"

"Othello. I suppose you have all seen this, so you can follow the play even if it is in Spanish."

"Oh, pshaw! I thought it was some Spanish variety show," sighed Hockley.

"I should not care to take you to a variety show, Jacob."

"But this will be dead slow."

"If you don't care to go, you can stay here."

"I guess I'll stay here then," answered Hockley. "I've got something of a headache, anyway. I'll go to bed early."

Hockley's headache was largely imaginary, and his thoughts were on another novel he had picked up, "Handsome Jack, the Dead Game Sport of Chicago." He had left off where Handsome Jack was confronted by four gamblers who wished to rob him of his fifty thousand dollar diamond stud, and

he was anxious to read on and find out how the "hold-up" terminated.

"Very well, Jacob," said Professor Strong. "If you have a headache I think the best thing you can do is to sleep it off. Probably the sight-seeing has been too much for your eyes."

At the proper hour the boys were ready to attend the performance at the Tacon. They were attired in their best, for at this opera house, people invariably wear the finest clothing they possess. The professor called a carriage, and soon they were rolling down the broad highway.

"How foolish Hockley is," whispered Frank to Mark. "He doesn't know what he is missing. Do you think he'll really go to bed?"

Mark shrugged his shoulders. "It isn't likely. He'll read another trashy novel, I fancy."

Mark was right, as we already know. But this was not the depth of Hockley's shortcomings.

The youth had a strong desire to be considered "mannish." He wanted to follow in the footsteps of certain men he had known and others he had read about. The character of Handsome Jack, "the Dead Game Sport of Chicago," appealed strongly to him. Jack played cards, drank, went to horse

ances, and always got the best of the many enemies who tried to "down" him. To poor Hockley, who swallowed these tales and believed them true, he was more of a hero than even "Gold Nose Hank, the Mine Discoverer" had been.

Having seen the others off, Hockley strolled over to a cigar counter in the hotel and invested in a package of cigarettes, one of which he lit and placed the others in his pocket. Then he entered the café and called for a glass of liquor, and while it was coming he sat down at a table in a corner to continue the perusal of his novel.

The fumes of the liquor, and the smoking of several cigarettes, made the misguided youth far from clear headed. But he kept on reading until the volume was finished, Handsome Jack having at last killed off all his enemies in double-quick order. To keep the eyes of the waiter off of him, Hockley ordered another glass of liquor which he also consumed. Then he threw the book in a corner, arose and stretched himself.

"Guess I'll go out and have some sport," he muttered. "It's dead slow hanging around like this. I came to see the sights and I'm going to see 'em—professor or no professor. There must be lots of

sport going on in a town of this size,—variety shows, gambling, and such—and I'm going to hunt 'em up, and if I don't find 'em then my name ain't Jake Hockley!"

And paying the amount of his bill he shuffled out of the brilliantly lighted café and was soon lost to sight in the darkness of the night.

CHAPTER IX

THE DISAPPEARANCE OF HOCKLEY

“WHAT a truly magnificent place!”

Such was Frank's comment when they entered the opera house and took the seats Professor Strong had purchased. Frank had been to the Metropolitan Opera House in New York city, yet the present place struck him even more favorably, with its immense size, its gorgeous decorations and its many and varied lights.

“It's all right,” returned Mark. “But I can't say as much for the crowd. It's quite a mixture.”

And it certainly was, for to-day Havana has a sprinkling of nearly every nation under the sun. As Darry put it, there were white folks there and black folks, and a good many who weren't one or the other. But all were well dressed, and in the assemblage were a number of ladies who were truly beautiful.

The Shakespearian play was well produced, and all followed it with interest, although the boys un-

derstood but little of what was said. Between the acts they strolled around and looked into the various smoking and lounging rooms, and had some soda water at the refreshment place. Nearly everybody was smoking and the atmosphere was decidedly "hazy" in consequence.

"They used to have a curious custom here," said the professor. "By paying a little extra you could go behind the scenes and see how the play looked from the actor's standpoint."

"Well, I'd like to see it that way, once," answered Sam. "Especially when they were playing something with great mechanical effects, like a snow-storm, a landslide, a waterfall, or a smash-up on a railroad."

At last the play was over, and they walked out to where their carriage was in waiting. A good part of the crowd lingered, and some went for a stroll in the cool night air.

"They don't believe in going to bed early," was Mark's comment. "Well, I don't blame them, it's so nice and cool now and so hot during the middle of the day."

It had been arranged that all the boys should occupy two large rooms, while the professor had a

smaller room adjoining. As they went in Amos Strong cautioned them not to disturb Hockley should the latter be asleep.

"Why, he isn't here!" exclaimed Mark, who was the first to look around and make the discovery.

"Isn't here?" came from the professor.

"No, sir, and the bed hasn't been disturbed either."

At once the professor's face grew grave, and his mind went back to a certain night in Caracas when Hockley had gone off with Dan Markel and lost all his money. Had the youth been equally misguided on this occasion?

"I will go below and make inquiries concerning him," he said, and left them.

"I'll wager Glummy has gone and done it again," said Frank in a low voice.

"More than likely," answered Sam. "How foolish for him if he has! He might have had a very pleasant evening with us."

"Oh, Glummy has a big head and thinks he knows it all," came from Darry. "Some time he'll catch it worse than he did when he went out with that Markel."

So the comments of the boys ran on. In the

meantime Professor Strong had followed up Hockley from the hotel proper to the café and here learned that the lad had come in early in the evening for a package of cigarettes and then gone out on the street.

"Did he have any liquor?" asked Professor Strong, sharply.

"I do not think so, señor," was the reply. This was a deliberate falsehood, but the proprietor of the drinking resort did not wish to get himself into any trouble.

More mystified than ever the professor went out on the street and looked up and down. He could see nothing of Hockley, and now the thoroughfares were becoming gradually deserted.

It must be confessed that Amos Strong was in a quandary. What had become of his charge he could not imagine, although he strongly feared that Hockley had gone off to see the sights and gotten into some sort of trouble.

"I can learn nothing of him," said he, on returning to the rooms assigned the party. "All of you had better go to bed."

"And what will you do, Professor?" asked Mark.

"I shall try to hunt him up. I cannot go to rest until I know something about him."

"Don't you think it would be better for one of us to go with you?"

"No, I think I can get along alone."

Such was Amos Strong's decision, and he told them they had better go to bed without delay. Mark and Frank were willing enough and were soon in the land of dreams. But Darry and Sam sat by an open window discussing the situation.

"After his experience with Dan Markel in Caracas you would think Hockley would turn over a new leaf," said Darry. "But he seems bound to be wild, no matter what the cost."

"We mustn't judge too hastily, Darry. It is barely possible that everything is all right."

"Or that Glummy has gotten into trouble through no fault of his own. If he is in trouble, he will certainly try to put it off on somebody else—he always does."

"It must be his nature. He can't seem to help it."

"He doesn't try to help it. He wants to be smart, and when he fails he isn't man enough to shoulder the blame."

For nearly an hour the boys remained at the window discussing the strange disappearance. Then they followed Mark and Frank to bed, and were soon sleeping with equal soundness.

The disappearance of Hockley, coupled with the fact that Professor Strong did not return, awoke the lads early, and by seven o'clock Darry and Sam were downstairs.

"Let us see if the professor is anywhere about," suggested Darry, and they were on the point of moving off when a hotel attendant came up to them, a man from Florida who spoke English.

"Are you Samuel Winthrop?" he asked.

"I am," answered Sam.

"I have a private note for you," went on the attendant.

"A note? What can it mean?"

"Perhaps it's from the professor?" suggested Darry.

Sam lost no time in tearing open the communication, which ran as follows:

"DEAR SAM: I have got myself in a tight hole and don't know how to get myself out of it. I am afraid the professor will give me rats for getting

into it. I think you can help me a good deal—in fact, I know you can, if you will. Please come to me at the Fairfax House—an English hotel. If you bring anybody along let it be Darry. I don't want the professor to know of it, and please don't tell Mark or Frank, for they would only have the laugh on me. If the professor wants to know, tell him you want to go on a little private errand. Do this much for me and I will always be,

“Yours gratefully,

“J. HOCKLEY.”

“Well, what do you make of that?” asked Sam, as he passed the note over to his companion.

“Glummy is in some sort of fix, that's certain,” answered Darry, after reading the communication twice.

“He doesn't say anything about money. I wonder what the fix can be?”

Neither could imagine, but Sam determined to go to the Fairfax House without delay, and inside of two minutes both were on the way, without leaving word of their destination.

It was an easy matter to find the hostelry named,

although to walk there took longer than they had expected, for the Fairfax House was situated in a new section of Havana and well toward the outskirts. It was a modest, well-kept hotel, and on seeing this the boys felt relieved.

"Looks all right," was Sam's comment. "Glad it isn't the other kind."

There was an old Cuban *volante* driver standing in front of the hotel, and as they came up he accosted them in broken English.

"Pardon, señors," he said. "Be you de gen'men by de name Winthrop or de name Carane?"

"Yes, my name is Winthrop," answered Sam. "And this is Mr. Crane."

"Dat is verra fortunate, señors. You come to see Señor Hockley, not so?"

"We did? Is he here?"

"He no here now. He had to go to udder house. He send me here to drive you dare, señors," and the Cuban bowed low.

"To drive to another house?" queried Darry.

"Yes, Señor Carane. Dare is my *volante*. Please to step in, señors."

"Wait." Sam caught Darry by the arm. "Is it far?" he questioned.

"Not verra far, señor—verra nice drive dis a-morning."

"What is the matter with our friend, Mr. Hockley?"

At this the Cuban shrugged his shoulders. "Cannot tell, señor. He is hurt in de back, I t'ink."

"Hurt in the back!" came from both Sam and Darry.

"That looks bad," continued the former. "Let us go to him by all means." And he followed the Cuban to the *volante*.

"It's a wonder Hockley didn't come straight to our hotel if he was hurt," said Darry. "But it's just like him. He is as stubborn as an ox when he wants to be."

In Cuba the *volante*, or "flyer" is the national carriage. It is a two-seated vehicle, slung on leathern straps between two very high wheels. The shafts are fifteen feet long, and the horses are harnessed tandem, the leader being for the postillion, or driver. It makes a very comfortable turnout and, because of the width from wheel to wheel, such a thing as a *volante* turning over is unknown.

They were soon moving over the highway at a good rate of speed. The Cuban offered no more ex-

planations and merely shrugged his shoulders when questioned.

"Either he is very dumb or he doesn't wish to explain," whispered Darry.

"I don't suppose Glummy told him everything, Darry. Perhaps the poor fellow is hurt too much for that."

"He can't be so badly off, or he wouldn't have been able to write that letter. By the way, what did you do with it?"

"Tore it up."

They were now passing several private residences and a moment later turned into a road which seemed almost deserted. Here the trees grew so low down that they frequently brushed the boys' heads.

"How much further?" demanded Sam.

"We come dare soon," shouted back the Cuban, and whipped up his horses harder than ever.

There was a small brook to cross and then they turned into another side road. Here they beheld an old stone building, which looked somewhat like a deserted convent. The windows were barred, but the doorway stood open.

"He in dare, señors," said the *volante* driver.
"He have a fall not far from here."

The Cuban pointed to the old stone building.

"I don't understand this," muttered Sam. "First he said that Hockley had to go to 'udder house.' Now he said he had a fall here."

"Come on, I'm not afraid, Sam."

So speaking Darry walked through the open doorway into the stone building. There being nothing else to do, Sam followed, and the *volante* driver came after the pair.

CHAPTER X

THE OLD CONVENT

AT first both boys could see but little, for the room they had entered was semi-dark, while outside the sun was shining brightly. But gradually their eyes became accustomed to the gloom and then they made out a staircase running to a floor above.

"Where is he?" demanded Sam, catching the *volante* driver by the arm.

"Him up de stairs, señor. Better air up dare."

"I should hope so" muttered Darry and bounded up the stone steps two at a time. Sam came on his heels, but the Cuban remained below.

There was something of a hallway, dirty and covered with dead leaves which past storms had blown into the barred slits of windows. Then came a room with an iron door which stood half open.

Just then a moan reached their ears and it appeared to come from the room. Thinking Hockley must be within they rushed past the iron door.

"Jake, are you here?" called out Sam.

There was another moan, but where it came from puzzled both of the lads.

"Jake, where are you?" exclaimed Darry. "We are here to help you, Sam and I."

Both moved forward, peering eagerly to the right and the left. There were only two windows, each heavily barred, and they were far from large.

Suddenly the boys heard the iron door shut and an instant later a heavy bolt was slipped into place. Sam leaped back and shook the barrier, to find it fast.

"We are locked in!" he ejaculated. "Darry, this is a trick!"

"A trick!" gasped the other. He too shook the door. "Hi! let us out!" he called.

"Not just yet, my fine young fellows!" came in a strangely familiar voice. "I did not bring you as far as this just for fun."

"Why, it is Captain Sudlip!" exclaimed Sam, who could scarcely believe his ears.

"Captain Sudlip, is that you?" called Darry.
"It is."

"Where is Jake Hockley?"

"He is not far off."

"Is he really hurt, or was it only a trick to get us here?"

"I'm not answering all your questions just yet," returned the ex-master of the *Chester*, tartly.

"If you brought us here on a fool's errand you shall pay for it," said Sam.

"You had better not threaten me while you are prisoners."

"Prisoners!" came from both.

"Do you intend to keep us prisoners?" demanded Sam.

"For the present, yes."

"What for?"

"To pay you back for your impudence on board of my steamer, for one thing."

"We weren't impudent. We merely stood up for our rights, and for the rights of that negro you misused."

"I won't argue the point with you—at least not now."

"What are you going to do?"

"Going to get back my rights. I know all about that paper your crowd gave to my second mate. That paper was a mess of lies and I'm not going to stand for it."

"We simply put down the truth, Captain Sudlip," answered Sam, firmly. "And if you don't let us go at once you'll get yourself into a worse situation than ever."

"I can't get into a much worse fix," growled the ex-ship's captain. "I've lost my position and without a recommendation, too. If I can't get it back through your crowd I'm going to make you pay for it. Reckon that professor of yours has considerable money, hasn't he?" went on Jason Sudlip, craftily.

"If he has you'll never get any of it," answered Darry, quickly. "I'd rot here first before I'd let him give you any on my account."

"And I say the same," came from Sam.

"Reckon you'll both sing a different tune when you are good and hungry," retorted the captain, but it was plain to tell by this tone that this was not exactly the reply he had anticipated.

"Will you tell us where Hockley is?" went on Sam, after a painful pause.

"He is not a million miles from here."

"Is he a prisoner, too?"

"I won't tell you?"

"How did he come to write that note?"

"I won't tell you that either."

The boys could now hear the *volante* driver calling up from below, and a moment later they heard the captain move along the hall and descend the stone stairs.

"Well, this is a pickle and no mistake," grumbled Darry, when they found themselves alone. "What do you make of it?"

"I hardly know what to make of it, so far," was the slow answer. "For all we know, Hockley has turned traitor to our crowd and is in with the captain."

"Do you think he is as bad as that?"

"If he isn't, how did he come to write that note?"

"That's true. But I shouldn't think it, even of Hockley. Ever since we saved him from that boa-constrictor he has acted pretty decently, for him."

They moved over to the windows, to see if they could catch sight of the captain or the *volante*. At first they saw nothing, but presently they caught a flying glimpse.

"There go the both of them!" cried Sam. "Darry, we have been left to our fate."

"Glummy wasn't with them."

"No."

"I wonder what Professor Strong will say when he finds we, too, are missing?"

"He'll be very much worried, no doubt of that. Perhaps he'll set the police on the track. I'd like to know if he found out anything about Glummy."

They did not intend to remain prisoners if they could help it, and so set to work immediately, exploring every nook and corner of the room, which was large and built in the shape of the letter L.

"I don't see any way out, excepting by way of the iron door, and that's as fast as can be," said Sam, after an hour had passed.

"Excepting we can pry off the bars from one of the windows."

"Even if you did that, how are you going to get to the ground? It's a good eighteen or twenty feet. If you dropped that far on those stones you might break a leg."

"Oh, I'd risk a drop. Besides, we can make a rope by tearing up a shirt, or one of our jackets. Anything to get away, to my way of thinking."

They examined the various bars to the windows and began operations on one which looked to be more loose than the others. But though they worked

with a will on the mortar with their pocket-knives, the stuff was hard and defied all their efforts.

"We ought to have one of Hockley's dime novel heroes here," said Sam, grimly. "He'd twist this bar out in a jiffy."

"Or one of the half-dime novel detectives," returned Darry. "He'd find a secret passageway leading down into a counterfeiter's den, with a trunk full of gold in the bargain."

"Well, this is no laughing matter, Darry. That ride made me hungry. If I had known this I'd had breakfast before I started."

"Yes, indeed, and I'd have packed a big lunch box in the bargain, Beans. But don't mention food—it only makes me more hungry. Let's take another look around."

"Bound to find that passageway to the counterfeiter's den, eh? All right, Old Flashlight, go ahead and make yourself famous."

Both boys laughed in spite of the seriousness of the situation, and then began another hunt around the room.

"I see something that I didn't notice before," observed Darry, after searching around for quarter of an hour. "Do you see this wall? Right above

my reach it is depressed for about a foot. If you'll boost me up to the ledge I'll feel around there for an opening."

"To be sure I'll boost you up. But don't fall and hurt yourself."

Once up on the ledge, Darry felt around with care. As before, he found plenty of dirt and mixed in with this were two or three musty books, a couple of empty bottles, and other odds and ends of no value whatever.

"Here's some reading for you—it will help to pass the idle hours," cried Darry, tossing the books to Sam.

"They are Spanish prayer books," said Sam, examining them by the light of one of the windows. "They are dated fifty and sixty years back."

"I thought I had struck rare volumes worth a few thousand dollars," returned Darry, dryly. "Too bad! Old Flashlight must renew his wondrous search! If we only—hullo!"

Darry broke off short and Sam heard the creaking of rusty iron.

"What have you discovered now?" he asked, after an anxious pause.

"Discovered a door, as sure as you live!" ex-

claimed Darry, and now he was quite excited. "Hurrah, it's daylight!"

He had pushed in a small iron door and true enough both could see a streak of sunlight beyond, streaming into a small stone passageway. In the passageway was an iron ladder, leading to the flat roof of the building. There was a trap door above, which the storms of years had moved several inches out of place.

It did not take Darry long to give Sam a hand up to the ledge, and then both boys entered the little passageway and crawled up the iron ladder. The trap door was thrown open and they came up onto the flat roof of the building. Near at hand was a sloping roof and also a square tower, all much dilapidated and covered in spots with heavy trailing vines.

"So far so good," exclaimed Darry, as he walked over to examine the tower. "Now if we can only get to the ground from here we'll be all right."

"There must be another stairway to the lower floor, Darry."

"To be sure, and it's likely in the tower. Come on."

Without much difficulty they crawled to the tower

in question. Here they found another trap door, but it was tightly fastened and although they did their best they could not budge it.

"Stumped again," grumbled Darry. "Did you ever see such luck?"

"I know what I'm going to do!" exclaimed Sam, suddenly. "I'm going to climb down on the vines. I am sure they are strong enough."

"Just the thing! Why didn't we think of it before."

They ran over to the edge of the tower and began to test the vines. Then Sam let himself down a few feet and Darry did the same. Soon they were moving downward, slowly and cautiously.

"There goes that volante again!" cried Darry, presently. "But it didn't have the captain in it."

"Let us get away as quickly as we can," came from Sam. "If we don't we may run into more trouble."

"Hi, you boys, come back here!" was the cry which reached their ears. "Come back, I say!"

In amazement, both looked up. There on the tower stood Captain Sudlip, shaking his fist at them!



"Hi, you boys, come back here!" — Page 102.

CHAPTER XI

A STRANGE STORY

It was plain to see that Captain Jason Sudlip was as much surprised as were Sam and Darry. He had returned in the *volante* expecting to find the two prisoners just where he had left them. Seeing them thus escaping upset all of his calculations.

"Come back here, I say!" he stormed. "Come back!"

"Not much!" replied Darry. "If you want us, crawl down after us."

"Don't tell him that!" put in Sam, in a whisper. "He'll go below and try to cut us off."

"Are you coming back?" demanded the ex-master of the *Chester*.

"Wait a minute until I unloosen my jacket," returned Sam. "It's caught fast on a vine."

"Gracious, you're not going back, are you?" whispered Darry, in dismay.

"No—we'll fool him," said Sam, in a still lower voice. Then he continued aloud: "We may as well give in, Darry, he's got the best of us."

"I hate to do it, but I'll follow you," answered Darry, also in a loud voice. "Will you climb up first?"

"Yes. But I'm caught fast. Wait till I cut that vine loose."

This talk reached Captain Sudlip's ears—as it was intended it should—and his wrathful look gave place to a grim smile.

"Thought I'd make 'em knuckle under," he muttered.

In the meantime Sam and Darry continued to climb down with all speed. It was hard for Captain Sudlip to look down at them but he felt the vines moving. He waited a few seconds. Then he heard a dull thud as both boys dropped to the ground below.

"Hi! you!" he yelled, and his face changed instantly. "Aren't you coming up? Well, I'll be jiggered!"

For at that moment he caught sight of the two boys, hurrying down the road leading away from the old convent. They were going at their best rate of speed and soon disappeared from view.

"Lost 'em!" he muttered and shook his fist in impotent rage. "First one and now two. I must get

out of here. This spot will soon be too hot to hold me!"

In the meantime the boys had made good their escape, with no injury excepting half a dozen scratches from the rough vines and the convent wall. On striking the ground their one thought had been to put distance between themselves and their enemy, and they ran a good way before they dropped into a walk.

"That was an adventure truly," puffed Darry. "Wonder what Professor Strong will say when he hears of it."

"We ought to have Captain Sudlip locked up, Darry. Besides we don't know yet what has become of Hockley."

"That's true. What do you propose?"

Both boys stopped short, to give the situation consideration.

"Let us stop at the first house we come to. Perhaps we can get help there. If we go all the way back to the hotel it will give the captain an elegant chance to clear out."

"All right, Beans, the next house it is," answered Darry.

It was not long after this that they came in sight

of a beautiful villa, set in a mass of tropical flowers. There was an avenue of palms leading up to the front veranda and at one side a beautiful fountain of marble.

On the veranda they found a young lady, sitting in a hammock reading a novel. She received them politely and they were glad to learn that she spoke excellent English.

"Papa is not at home at present" she said. "He left last week to go to Key West, Florida, on business. Is there anything I can do for you?"

A long conversation ensued, and the boys learned that the young lady's name was Isabel Valois. Her father was a tobacco exporter and owned large plantations both in Cuba and in Porto Rico. She had been educated in a private seminary in Havana, but had spent two years at a young lady's school in the United States. She listened to their tale with close attention and a face full of concern.

"I think I saw Captain Sudlip drive past yesterday in the *volante* of which you speak. And late last night I heard somebody drive past at a furious rate of speed. I am willing to help you all I can, but there are at present only three old servants here and one has to look after my mamma, who is an invalid.

Perhaps it would be best for you to take our carriage and drive back to town or to some other house for assistance."

"Thank you, we'll take the carriage, if you don't mind. Have you somebody to drive it and show the way?"

"Yes—myself," and she laughed merrily. "The adventure will just suit me. While old Jose is harnessing up you shall have breakfast."

As both were tremendously hungry they could not resist this invitation, and soon they were seated in a broad and cool dining hall and eating the food which was hastily prepared for them. The meal did not take long and by the time it was over Isabel Valois drove around with a comfortable carriage of American manufacture. They climbed in, there was a merry crack of the whip, and off they started in the direction of Havana proper.

Had their minds been at ease, Sam and Darry would have enjoyed that ride thoroughly, for Isabel Valois handled the reins with skill, and the team was a spirited one. She was what Darry called a "jolly" girl, and as they passed along she entertained them with a bright flow of talk, as she pointed out many objects of interest.

"I like the people from the United States," she said, archly. "And I was so disappointed when Cuba was not taken into the Union. But papa says it is bound to come sooner or later."

"And it will," answered Sam. "But tell me," he went on, "were you at home when Havana was blockaded?"

"To be sure I was, and many were scared to death, for fear the big guns on the war-ships would bombard our homes. Once, when a wild shot did come this way, all the servants ran down into our cellar and hid in a corner."

"And weren't you scared?" asked Darry, with a twinkle in his eye.

"No, I was not. I knew the Americans were our friends and would not hurt us."

"I am afraid we hurt some Cubans down at Santiago."

"Oh, that was different. Here it was only a blockade—that was a direct attack."

The drive into the city of Havana took them past the Fairfax House, and here the boys determined to stop and learn if anything had been seen or heard of Hockley.

They had just leaped to the pavement when Professor Strong ran forward to meet them.

"Crane and Winthrop!" he ejaculated. "What does this mean?"

"It's a long story, sir," answered Sam. "Have you seen anything of Hockley?"

"No. I was looking for him the best part of the night and also for you, after I learned that you, too, were missing. I traced Hockley and you to this hotel by the note which you tore up and which Mark and Frank patched together. Did you follow Hockley up?"

"We don't know," answered Darry, and continued soberly: "It looks as if poor Glum—I mean Jake—had met with foul play."

Isabel Valois was introduced, and the discovery was made that Professor Strong had met her father years before. Then the two boys told their story. As they proceeded Amos Strong's face grew dark.

"This Captain Sudlip is a scoundrel!" he murmured. "We shall have to notify the police. He has been discharged from the command of the *Chester*, and it has made him vindictive."

"So he has lost command of the steamer?" asked Darry.

"Yes. The owners were very angry that he did not have those repairs made at La Guayra, where they would have been cheaper, it seems, than here. Then they read the note that we signed, and Captain Sudlip got his walking papers. I heard afterward that the owners were tired of him as it was. But of course he lays the blame of his discharge on us. We may have to——"

"Here comes Hockley!" broke in Darry.

He pointed up the street and all looked in that direction. It was the lank youth sure enough, but so haggard, ragged and dirty that they scarcely recognized him. He did not see them until he was close at hand and then he started and flushed guiltily.

"Hockley, what does this mean?" demanded Professor Strong, but his voice was not particularly harsh, for he saw that the big youth had suffered.

"Oh, I'm so glad to get back," said the truant, when he could speak. "I'm nearly dead, sir."

"Where have you been?"

"It's all that Captain Sudlip's fault, sir. He got me in a regular box," whined Hockley. Then he looked at Sam and Darry. "I thought he—he carried you off, too."

"He didn't carry us off. We tried to follow you,

after you wrote that you were in trouble and wanted us to come."

"I didn't write any such note."

"You didn't!" burst out Sam and Darry, simultaneously.

"No, I didn't. I wrote a note for Captain Sudlip, but it wasn't that."

"What was it?"

At first Hockley did not want to answer this question, but he finally admitted that he had written a note stating that Captain Sudlip had treated him first-class while on the *Chester* and that he was satisfied the captain was a good man. He did not add that he had also written that there was a plot against the captain, hatched out, shortly after leaving Kingston harbor, by Professor Strong, and the second mate.

"I had to write the note. The captain had me a prisoner and he threatened me in all sorts of ways," concluded Hockley.

Again there was a conference, and it was decided that they no longer needed the services of Isabel Valois, although the young lady said she would place her carriage at their disposal as long as they wished it.

"You must surely call on me before you leave Havana," said she. "I wish to hear the end of this adventure," and Sam and Darry promised.

On the way to the hotel at which the party were stopping Hockley told his story in detail only leaving out the fact that he had been drinking and that when he left the café it had been with the intention of seeking amusement at some low theater.

"I thought I'd take a walk and try to get rid of my headache," he said. "I walked further than I intended, and when I was on something of a lonely street I noticed that I was being followed. It was Captain Sudlip, and behind him came a Cuban who was driving one of those *volantes*. The captain came up to me and started to talk. He was very friendly and humble and said if he lost his job he wouldn't know where to look for another. Then he asked me to ride over to the home of one of the owner's of the steamer and put in a good word for him, and I consented."

Hockley could tell but little of the ride that had followed, for the reason that his head had been muddled by the liquor he had imbibed. He put it down to a headache, and it is quite likely that he did have a headache.

“ At last we stopped in front of some sort of stone building,” he continued, “ and the captain took me inside. Then he laughed at me and told me I was a prisoner. We had a fight and he knocked me down and tore my clothing as you see. Then he made me write that letter. He wanted me to write to the other boys but I refused. After that he left me alone in the dark. I crawled around until I got to a barred window. One of the bars was loose and I pulled it out and crawled through the window. Then I started to run across a field but fell into a hole and struck my head on a stone. I don’t know how long I lay there. But when I got up it was light, and then I started to walk back into town, for I hadn’t a cent left with which to hire a carriage.”

CHAPTER XII

ABOUT CUBA AND TOBACCO RAISING

By the time Hockley had finished his story the party had reached the hotel, where Mark and Frank were found, wondering what was going on. They still had the pieces of the torn-up note in their possession, and now it was noticed that it was written in a crude imitation of Hockley's handwriting.

"Jake, we owe you an apology for having thought you wrote that," said Sam, frankly.

"Yes," put in Darry. "We owe you an apology true enough. I guess you were locked up in the same old convent we were in," he went on.

"I am going to proceed against Captain Sudlip without delay," said Professor Strong. "We have a strong case against him and he shall suffer for his misdeeds."

But though the professor spoke thus, to proceed was no easy matter. When the old convent was visited no trace of the ex-master of the *Chester* was to be found, nor could his whereabouts be traced

from the Fairfax House. The Cuban who had driven the *volante* had likewise disappeared.

"Stumped!" said Darry, laconically. "He knows enough to keep shady. He won't show himself until after we are gone, and neither will that rascally Cuban."

Owing to what had occurred, it was resolved to remain in Havana for the balance of the week, and during the next few days all the boys spent a large part of their time in sight-seeing. They inspected Morro Castle, and a guide explained how it had been fortified during the Spanish-American War, and they also visited some of the other fortifications. Next came a trip to the post-office, treasury building, the military offices and the cathedral. At the latter place they were shown an urn said to contain the bones of Columbus.

"Are they really his bones?" asked Mark.

"More than likely," answered Professor Strong. "Yet this statement has often been disputed. Some say the bones are in Spain and others that they are in South America. It matters little where his bones lie. The fame of Columbus will ever remain the same."

After the visit to the cathedral came another to

the public art gallery, and the museum, and they also visited both the Cuban and the English cemeteries, beautiful spots, with many tall and imposing monuments. They also drove out to Principe Castle and spent two days at other points in the suburbs.

A railroad runs from Havana, south-westward to Pinar del Rio, a distance of about a hundred miles, and it was decided that one day should be spent at this city, the most important in the extreme western section of Cuba. This railroad was formerly of small importance but since the dawn of Cuban liberty, matters have taken a brisker turn.

"They had the same trouble here that they are having in South America," said the professor, during the journey. "The natives do not take to the cars, no matter how low the fare. They prefer to journey on muleback or on foot, even though it takes much longer."

"What a difference between that and our own country," said Frank, with a laugh. "Just let a railroad lop off an hour from the running time between New York and Chicago, or between Chicago and San Francisco, and everybody runs to ride on that railroad." And then all laughed.

"How large is Cuba?" asked Darry. "I did know, but I stored the knowledge away so carefully that I've forgotten where I put it."

"Cuba is, roughly speaking, over seven hundred miles from east to west, and from fifty to a hundred miles from north to south. It contains nearly forty-four thousand square miles of territory, but a large portion of this is either very rocky, as in the mountains, or else very marshy, as along the seacoast. There is a mountain range running almost the entire length of the island. It is called the Sierra del Cobra, and boasts of one peak, the Pico de Torginno, 7,670 feet high. Besides this range of mountains there are numerous hills, particularly in the east."

"What of the rivers?" asked Frank.

"As in Jamaica the rivers do not amount to a great deal, for the water flows directly from the mountains into the sea. There is one, called the Cauto, which empties on the south coast, just north of Manzanillo. This can be navigated by small craft for a distance of sixty miles. But there are a number of bays which make good harbors. The one at Santiago de Cuba is particularly fine."

"Where the great fight came off, and where Hob-

son sunk the *Merrimac*!" cried Sam. "We must see that by all means. I once saw the *Merrimac*, but she was only a coal boat at that time."

"The *Monitor* sunk the *Merrimac*," came from Hockley, who was half asleep in his seat. And then as the other boys began to laugh he straightened up. "What are you laughing at anyway?" he growled. "I know I'm right."

"We are talking about the Spanish-American War, not the Civil War," explained the professor.

"Oh!"

"There are only two great industries in Cuba," went on Professor Strong. "But some day there will be a third. The two are tobacco and sugar. They dominate trade and have made many Spaniards and Cubans rich. The town we are now bound for, Pinar del Rio, is the center of trade of the Vuelta Abajo tobacco district. The folks for miles around do nothing but raise tobacco."

"And what will that third industry be?" asked Darry.

"The development of the mineral resources of the island. There are large quantities of minerals in the mountains, and sooner or later companies will be organized to dig them out. The very name of the

mountain, Sierra del Cobra, means Copper Mountains."

"I'd like to explore those mountains," said Mark. "It would be lots of fun to peep down into an extinct volcano or two."

"We can do that when we get to other places, Mark. South America is full of old volcanoes."

"That's the talk!" cried Frank, enthusiastically. "We'll become volcano explorers. It will be fine. Who knows but that we may find a fortune in gold."

The ride to Pinar del Rio soon came to an end. The boys were somewhat disappointed in the town, which boasts of about nine thousand inhabitants. There are but few public buildings of note and everything looked rather hot and dusty. But the tobacco warehouses were something new to them, and the professor had a Cuban who could speak English take them around.

"Tobacco is grown in various ways in different countries," said the professor, as they walked around. "But the usual method, and the easiest, is to plant the seed in a specially prepared garden, or hot-house frame. As soon as it is up a few inches the plants are taken to the field and each is set out on its own little hill. Plants, to be good, require con-

stant care, especially against the insects, that would otherwise eat holes in the leaves and render them of small value.

"When the leaves are full grown the plant is cut down and the leaves are hung up, ends down, to dry. From this drying process they are taken to the curing shed where they are thoroughly cured, after which they are ready for packing, in hogsheads or large cases. How they make cigars you saw down in Venezuela."

"My father frequently has cigars that are all spotted," said Mark. "What do the spots come from?"

"If they are genuine they come from a gum in the leaf, which appears on the surface when the leaf is fully ripe. But many of the spots—which some smokers look for—are put on artificially."

"What about smoking tobacco and snuff?" asked Darry.

"And cigarettes?" put in Hockley.

"Smoking tobaccos are nothing more than tobacco leaves cut up in various ways and snuff is tobacco ground up. The smoking tobaccos are flavored with a hundred and one different things and chemicals are often used to keep them moist, and this

treatment is also true of chewing tobacco. Some snuffs are allowed to rot before being used and others are baked, and many of them are perfumed. As to cigarettes, the best of them are made of carefully selected tobacco leaves, cut fine, and rolled up in a high grade of specially prepared rice paper. But the ordinary cigarette, of which millions are sold, is made of the very commonest of tobacco, adulterated in many ways, and is utterly unfit for smoking. These cigarettes, often used by boys and young men, are so utterly bad that even old tobacco-saturated Cubans—like these working around this warehouse—cannot use them without feeling sick.”

The last words were uttered for Hockley’s benefit. The eyes of the tall youth sought the ground and a moment later he turned away. But it was evident that he was doing some deep thinking. A little later, when he felt he was unobserved, he dropped a half package of cigarettes in an out-of-the-way corner.

The ride back to Havana in the cool of the evening was delightful and the boys enjoyed it thoroughly, that is, all but Hockley, who soon went to sleep.

“I really can’t see why he came with us,” ob-

served Sam to the others, in a low tone. "He doesn't seem to enjoy the sight-seeing a bit."

"He wants something more startling," answered Frank. "He told me this morning that everything was dead slow. He wants more sport. If he had his way I really believe he'd turn in to paint the town red, as they call it."

"I don't believe he told us the whole truth about his meeting with Captain Sudlip, do you?"

"No, I don't. I think he went out for a good time and perhaps he had some liquor."

"That's what I was thinking," came from Mark. "But as we don't know we shouldn't misjudge him. If he's got this wildness in his constitution it may be awfully hard for him to keep even as straight as he does."

CHAPTER XIII

A CUBAN BASEBALL GAME

ON the following morning the boys spent a good hour poring over the map of Cuba. It had been decided that they should go to Matanzas and Cardenas on the coast east of Havana, and they asked the professor why they could not continue eastward as far as Colon and Santa Clara."

"We can if you wish it," answered Amos Strong.

"I see there is a railroad runs from Santa Clara to Cienfuegos on the south coast," said Mark. "Why not go to that port? We ought to find some vessel there bound for Santiago."

Willing to do what the boys desired, within reasonable limits, Professor Strong put the matter to a vote. Four at once voted in favor of Mark's plan. Hockley said neither yes nor no.

"How do you vote, Jacob?" asked the professor, pleasantly.

"What's the use of my voting?" grumbled the tall youth. "If I voted the other way it would be four to one."

"Have you any objection to Mark's plan?"

"Oh, no, I reckon it's as good as any. I think the whole of Cuba rather stale."

"What did you expect?"

"Oh, I want to see something of life. Do they have bull fights?"

"Not as they did formerly. But the Cubans are beginning to play baseball," and there was a twinkle in the professor's eye as he spoke.

"Humph, I can see that at home."

"Oh, let's go and see a game!" cried Darry. "Do you know of any here?"

For reply the professor produced a handbill which had been given him in the courtyard of the hotel. It stated that a game of ball would take place that afternoon on a certain public grounds between the Palmas of Havana and the Roosevelts of Florida."

"Say, but they are high-toned on names," was Frank's comment. "The President of Cuba against the President of the United States."

"Whoop!" cried Darry, throwing his cap into the air. "Let's go and root for Teddy!"

"Let's!" shouted the others, and even Hockley brightened at the suggestion.

The professor was quite willing to let them go, feeling that the game would likely give Hockley something of the excitement he craved. The matter was soon arranged, and they purchased the best seats available.

When they reached the public grounds they found a crowd assembled, and the ball players were already at practice on the green field. There were several hundred Americans present, many in carriages, and among the carriages they discovered the Valois turnout, with Isabel Valois and a number of other young people.

"I thought I'd see you here," declared the young lady. "No Yankee boy can keep away from a ball game," and she smiled as she shook hands and was introduced to those she had not before met.

Mark was anxious to see the American players more closely. As we know, he had always been a good ball player and had been the captain of the team at Lakeview Academy, beating Hockley for that position by several votes, much to the bully's discomfiture. Now he worked his way through the crowd close to the American players' "bench," in

this case an awning spread to shade a certain spot on the grass to the right of the home plate.

The ball players were all about Mark's age, one or two a little older, and seemed to be a jolly set. But as Mark came nearer so did one of the team and his face wore a serious expression.

"Ronaldson is no better," Mark heard him tell the others. "Complains of terrible cramps."

"Is he going to try to play?" asked one of the other players.

"Yes, but I don't know how long he will last."

"Then you'll have to use Blackney."

"I suppose so, but he's got a sore hand and can't half catch. We need a good man on second base. The Palmas are going to do their best to win this game."

The talk interested Mark greatly and it aroused the baseball fever in his veins. He caught the eye of one of the players and beckoned to him.

"Are any of you fellows from New York state?" he asked.

"Yes, Len Gardell is from Rochester," was the answer.

"I come from New York city," went on Mark. "I'm an old ball player—used to be captain of the

Lakeview Academy nine of New Hampshire. We once played a team from Rochester—the Silver Stars. Can I speak to Mr. Gardell? My name is Mark Robertson.”

“Why, certainly, Mr. Robertson,” said the ball player, and held out his hand. “My name is Bob Lee. I’m from Atlanta, Georgia. We put ourselves down as from Florida for we have been playing there—at several of the big hotels.”

And a minute later Mark was introduced to all of the team and made to feel quite at home.

Having finished their chat with Isabel Valois and her companions, the others made their way to the stand and found the seats assigned to them. Soon all of the baseball players were out on the diamond and the game began with the Cuban team at the bat.

“It’s funny Mark doesn’t come,” said Darry. “He always thinks so much of a ball game.”

“He went off to see the players,” answered Frank. He looked toward the “bench.” “I declare there he is now, talking to one of the substitute players!”

“Then he’s at home,” laughed Darry. “You won’t get him back here, unless the umpire drives him from the field.”

When Hockley saw Mark sitting on the "bench" he was green with envy.

"Always getting in," he muttered to himself. "That's just the way he got in on me at the academy! Confound the luck!" And then Hockley tried to get on the field himself, but was ordered back by one of the policemen stationed there to keep the crowd in bounds.

The boys had already learned that this game was the last of a series of three. Each club had already won one game. A prize of a silver cup and half of the gate money were to go to the winner of the series.

At first glance it did not appear as if the Cuban club could play. They seemed to toss the ball about in reckless fashion and strike out wildly when at the bat, yet at the end of the fourth innings the score was a tie, 3 to 3.

"This game is all right," was Frank's comment. "I've seen many a worse one right on the Polo grounds in New York."

"Oh, the New Yorks can't play ball anyway," growled Hockley.

In the next innings both clubs scored two runs, bringing the score up to another tie. There was a beautiful running catch made by one of the Cuban

fielders and this was roundly applauded by the American as well as the Cuban spectators.

"Give these Cubans a few more years and they'll be as crazy for baseball as we are," said Darry.

In the first half of the sixth innings the Cubans scored another run. A "pop" fly had been knocked across the diamond but the second baseman failed to hold it. As it was a clear muff some in the crowd groaned, at which the baseman looked more disconcerted than ever.

"Don't groan or hiss," said Professor Strong. "Every player is bound to miss it sometime. That baseman did very well before. And he acts to me as if he was sick. I've seen him holding his stomach several times."

The Roosevelts now came to the bat with a score of 6 to 5 against them. The first player up was put out on strikes and the second on a foul tip. The third batsman had a ball and a strike called and then sent a long, high fly to center field.

"Hurrah!" yelled the crowd of Americans. "That's a daisy! Run! Run!"

"It's a home run. Go it, longlegs, go it!"

"Don't let them stop you at third! You've got lots of time!"

The yelling continued. In the meantime the center fielder was racing after the ball like mad. He caught it up just as the runner was leaving third for the home plate and threw it to the catcher with all his strength. But it fell short of its mark and was captured by the pitcher, who whirled around and delivered it home just as the runner slid in amid a cloud of dust and a yelling which could be heard for half a mile. Then those close by saw the catcher leap for the ball, capture it in one hand and fall in a heap on top of the man who had slid in to victory.

"He's safe!" was the cry, as the crowd saw the umpire keep his hand down. "Oh, wasn't that a dandy run!"

"And wasn't that a dandy hit!"

It was several seconds before the dust cleared away and then it was seen that something was wrong. The runner had been kicked in the arm by the catcher and the latter had tumbled and bruised his knee. Both had to be helped from the field and time was called while the hurts were attended to by a doctor who happened to be present.

"They say that runner is out of the game," was the report which went the round a little later. "And

that second baseman has retired too. He's suffering from cramps. The catcher is all right."

"If the Roosevelts lose two men they will be one man short," said Sam. "They had only one substitute at the bench."

"Perhaps the others are somewhere around," answered Darry.

The catcher came limping up and the game was resumed. But no more runs were made and the innings came to an end with another tied score, 6 to 6. Then came a long wait.

"I hope they don't call it off on account of not having another substitute," said Frank. And then he continued: "I wonder where Mark is? He isn't down at the bench."

A minute later the American team came from their dressing room, where they had been in conference, and ran to their various positions on the field.

As they did so the boys in the stand gave a cry of amazement.

"Well, I never!" came from Darry.

"Is it really Mark?" questioned Sam.

"Of course it is!" shouted Frank, leaping to his feet and swinging his cap. "It's Mark, and he's going to play second base!"

CHAPTER XIV

WINNING A VICTORY

FRANK was right, one of the two substitute players to go forth was really Mark, and he had run across the diamond to fill the important position mentioned.

The explanation of this state of affairs is very simple. On being introduced to the player from Rochester Mark had discovered that he had met the fellow before, and a long talk on baseball matters followed. Then Mark was introduced to the captain of the team, who told of the way they were handicapped with only one substitute player, two others having disappointed him, and of the fact that the second baseman was liable to give out at any moment.

After the muff already mentioned the second baseman refused to play longer and had to be excused. Then came the accident at the home plate and the team found itself short a man.

"I'll fill that place," came from Mark. "I think I can give satisfaction. Anyway, I'll try my best."

"Give him the chance," came from the Rochester player, and so it was decided, the captain thinking he could remove Mark at the end of one innings if the youth proved "a stick," as he put it.

It was natural for the boys to give a cheer, and they did so with a will, even Professor Strong joining in, for he was almost as enthusiastic as anybody. Mark heard and saw them and waved his hand. He had slipped on a player's suit, as well as a cap and a pair of baseball shoes and, to use Frank's words, "he looked the real thing."

But there was one in the crowd who did not fancy the turn affairs had taken. I doubt if there is need to state that this was Hockley.

"Humph! so he has wormed his way in with them," he muttered. "I hope he loses the game."

The ardor of the Americans among the spectators was considerably daimpened when the two substitutes appeared. With the score a tie and only three more innings to play it was felt that the Roosevelts would have to put forth their very best efforts in order to win.

The seventh inning was over in remarkably short

order. There was but one base hit, made by the Cubans, and this runner "died" at third. Mark had next to nothing to do at second, nor did he come to the bat. But the other substitute came to the plate, and when he "fanned the air" for three strikes a deep groan went up.

"The subs are no good! Might as well give up the game!" cried some of the hasty ones.

In the next inning the Cubans managed by good luck to score two runs. In this inning Mark might have put one of the runners out at second, but the ball was thrown so high up that only his finger tip touched it. Yet this counted as an error for him and the other players looked far from pleased.

"I knew it," muttered Hockley to Sam. "He can't play—he isn't in practice."

"Jake Hockley, you ought to be ashamed!" retorted Sam, and then turned his back on the lank youth.

With the score 8 to 6 in their favor the Palmas came to the bat for the last time. One man went out on strikes and the next on a foul. Then came the third, a heavy-set fellow, who "lined it out" straight for the pitcher.

It was a "hot" ball, far too hot for that pitcher

to take, even in a last inning, and he hardly made a move for it. But Mark made a leap, and almost before the spectators realized what was up, he held the sphere in his left hand and the umpire had called "out!"

"Hurrah!" yelled Frank. "That's the stuff!" And the others followed in a cheer, while Professor Strong's face wore a broad smile. This game of ball made him feel a good deal like a boy again.

"Two runs to tie the score and three to win the game," said more than one player of the Roosevelts as they took their positions at the "bench." "Oh, we must get together and do something. We can't allow these Cubans to win the series."

The first player to the bat was the left fielder. He was usually counted a careful hitter and nobody was surprised when he reached first base in safety. But the others were sorry he had not made third, or at least second.

There followed an out on strikes and aided by a short passed ball, the runner reached third, taking desperate chances. Then came a short hit which took the batter to first by "fielder's choice," the ball being thrown in to cover the home plate. But the man on third was wise and stayed there.

"Hilgard to the bat, Robertson on deck!" sang out the scorer, and Mark's heart gave a thump. Was it possible that the result of this game was to depend upon him?

In another moment he knew, for Hilgard went out on strikes, amid a mad yelling from the Cubans. There were now two out, so the whole result of that contest rested upon Mark's shoulders.

"You must do it, Mark!" yelled Frank, at the top of his lungs. "Go in, old boy, and win! Whoop her up for old Lakeview!" And then the others took up the cry, that is, all but Hockley, who, true to his nickname, remained as glum as ever.

When Mark stepped up to the home-plate it was with a determination to "do or die" right then and there. He grasped the ash stick firmly, planted his feet and took a good, hard hold of his nerves.

The Cuban pitcher eyed him curiously. He was a "new proposition" and the pitcher hardly knew how to handle him. He stepped back, gave the catcher a sign, and delivered a swift out curve. Mark let it go by.

"Ball one!" called the umpire.

"That's right, take your time!" yelled Frank.

He was standing up and so was everybody else in the stand.

In came the ball again and this time Mark struck at it but missed.

“Strike one!”

A loud yelling went up from the Cubans.

Mark took a firmer grip than ever. It must be confessed that he was in an agony of mind. What if he should “fan out?” He was certain that club would never forgive him. And he was equally certain that he should never forgive himself.

And then came a ball waist high and directly over the plate, a beautiful ball, and just where Mark wanted it. Around came the bat in one swift drive. There was a crack, and the ball went sailing down into deep center field.

On the instant the crowd in the stand were yelling like so many demons and Frank was dancing up and down as if he had suddenly gone crazy. Mark had reached first—he was already on his way to second, and still the center fielder was chasing after that ball, which kept bouncing on and on just out of his reach. One runner crossed the home-plate and the second followed almost on his heels. The catcher was yell-

ing and so was the captain of the Palmas but nobody heard them. Mark, his breath coming thick and fast was fairly leaping through the air on his way to third. Here the baseman made a feint as if to catch the ball and Mark ducked and slid in to the bag.

"Go on! Go on!" yelled the coach, and a hundred others, and Mark glanced back, to see that the fielder was just picking up the ball. How he got to his feet he never knew, but off he started for home, amid a yelling that was louder than ever. He came over like the wind, to sink exhausted near the "bench,"—and then the ball came in.

The game was won!

"Hurrah for Mark!" Frank fairly screamed, and made a wild leap into the field, followed by Sam and Darry, and even the professor, and in another moment the enclosure was black with people. All the Americans were shouting loudly, while the Cubans had but little to say.

"He must be a first-class professional," said one Cuban.

"Nothing of the kind," retorted Frank, who heard the remark. "He is only an academy player. He never played on a professional team in his life."

The players on the Roosevelt nine were not slow

in congratulating Mark, and had he allowed it they would have carried him around the field on their shoulders. But Mark was too modest for this, and as soon as possible escaped to the dressing room.

"Oh, say, but it was great!" burst out Darry, as he wrung Mark's hand. "Better than anything I ever saw at Lakeview."

"You fairly lifted the crowd off its feet with that home run," put in Sam. "Even the professor was yelling like a senior."

"Was I?" the question came from Amos Strong himself, who stood behind Sam. "Well, I fancy the game was worth it," he added, but looked rather sheepish for a second.

The Roosevelts insisted upon giving Mark a supper that night (since he had refused to accept part of the gate money for his services), and a good time was had until late in the evening. Frank accompanied Mark, and during that festive hour the lads made several warm friends.

"But the Cubans played a good game," observed Darry, to Sam, while they and Hockley and the professor were waiting for Mark and Frank to return. "It was nip and tuck from start to finish."

"That hit by Mark was a fluke," grumbled Hock-

ley. "I'll bet a thousand dollars he can't do it again."

"Perhaps it was a fluke," returned Sam, dryly. "But, just the same, Glummy, you'll never have such a fluke happen to you;" and then Sam turned his back on the bully.

Hockley sauntered off to his sleeping apartment all out of sorts both with himself and everybody around him.

"After this they'll be more stuck on themselves than ever," he growled. "And they won't want anything to do with me. But never mind, I'll fix them yet, see if I don't!"

CHAPTER XV

HOCKLEY TAKES A BATH AND GIVES ONE

ON the following day Professor Strong and the boys received a call from Isabel Valois and her father, the latter having just returned home from a business trip. Señor Valois was delighted to meet the professor once more, and an interview pleasing to both ensued, lasting an hour. In the meantime pretty Isabel talked to the boys and especially to Mark.

“It was splendid, that baseball hit!” cried the girl, enthusiastically. “I hated to see our Cuban club lose but I couldn’t help admire the beautiful way in which you played.” And Mark blushed like a girl and could hardly stammer out his thanks for her kind words.

Señor Valois was telling the professor of his various plantations when another visitor was announced. This proved to be January Jones, who had been waiting patiently to see Amos Strong about the position which had been more than half promised. As

a* result of this visit January was given work as overseer's assistant on a Valois's plantation ten miles out of Havana. This proved to be just what the darkey wanted and he was correspondingly happy.

Matanzas lies east of Havana about sixty miles and Cardenas is about twenty miles further. As said before, both are seaports, the first named lying almost due south from Key West. The railroad from Havana runs direct to Matanzas, but to get to Cardenas one must journey first to the little inland town of Jovellanos.

The trip eastward was begun bright and early on the following week and proved full of interest. The cars were crowded and the boys noticed that many of the travelers seemed well-to-do.

"Matanzas is, as a commercial city, next in importance to Havana," said the professor as they rode along. "It has a large shipping and the population is nearly forty thousand. Not far from the city are located the Caves of Bellamar. I never visited them, but they are said to be of uncommon interest and beauty."

"Let us go by all means!" cried Darry. "I just love caves and volcanoes and high mountains."

Matanzas was reached in the middle of the fore-

noon, and before dining they paid a visit to the fortifications which had taken active part in the war, and also to a number of public buildings. Then they dined, and after that set out for the caves on mule-back, along with a native guide, who owned the mules and who said he could take them around to every point of interest.

The mule he rode interested Darry very much, for, as old readers know, he took naturally to any animal that could be saddled. The mule was not very large, but he looked powerful and his gait proved a surprise.

"I really believe he could win a race on a pinch!" said Darry.

"Do you?" queried Hockley. "I'll go you for a mile."

Darry was surprised to receive such a challenge from the lank youth, but he did not hesitate to accept, and away went both lads before either the professor or the guide could stop them.

At first it was nip-and-tuck, for Hockley's beast was also swift of foot, and it was not long before the racers passed out of sight beyond a turn. Professor Strong began to look serious but the Cuban guide only smiled.

"They will not run far," he said, in Spanish. "And when they drop into a walk they will pay up for their speed by going slower than ever."

Nevertheless, the others set off after the two in advance, for the guide feared they would take to the wrong road, one leading into the country and away from the caves.

This was just what Darry and Hockley did, and soon they came to what was little better than a rough trail, with thatched huts on either side. The mules kept together at first but presently Darry forged ahead.

"Whoop! here we go!" he yelled. "Look out for the mountain express!" And then he had to cling fast, as the mule switched his heavy-ended tail and kicked up with his rear hoofs.

Soon Darry reached what seemed to be the middle of a settlement, with huts on all sides. Here was a big stone cistern, filled with water, and with the top wide open. Several natives were at hand, some of them with buckets and shells.

As soon as he reached the cistern the mule Darry rode came to an abrupt halt. Looking back the boy saw that Hockley was now having his hands full

with his steed, which was rearing and plunging in a most surprising fashion.

"Look out, Glummy, or he'll throw you!" he sang out. "He's getting his dander up!"

"He shan't throw me!" panted Hockley. "I'll show him who is master!" And he hit the mule on the neck with his fist.

By this time the professor and the other boys came riding up, along with the guide. Hockley's mule kept dancing around, and they had to move from one spot to another to keep out of the way.

"Better get off!" began Professor Strong, when of a sudden the mule made a sudden bolt forward.

Four leaps took the animal to the low wall of the cistern and here he stopped abruptly. Then up went his rear hoofs like lightning and in an instant Hockley was thrown into the air. Down came the youth head first, to strike the water with a loud splash, and then he disappeared from sight.

A perfect roar of laughter went up, both from the boys and from the natives, and Professor Strong kept a straight face with difficulty. It was a truly comical sight, and when Hockley came up the boys had to laugh still more. In going down

the lank youth's head had touched the unclean bottom of the cistern and now his hair and face were covered with a greenish mud and slime awful to behold.

"Hel—help me out, somebody!" he spluttered, blowing the water from his mouth.

"I'll help you," answered the professor, and leaping to the ground he gave the unfortunate one his hand. Getting out of the cistern was easy and in a moment more Hockley stood in the roadway brushing the water and dirt from him and glaring savagely at Darry and the others.

"It ain't no laughing matter!" he howled. "You shut up, or I'll give you something to laugh about."

"It's too bad, Glummy," began Mark, when he could suppress his feelings sufficiently to speak. "But you did look so funny——"

"I don't want you to talk to me!" stormed Hockley, working himself up into a perfect rage. "You are all against me. I'm going back to the city, and maybe I'll start for home to-morrow."

"Be calm, Jacob," put in the professor. "It was truly unfortunate, but there is no occasion for mak-

ing matters worse by losing control of your temper. I dare say if I had been thrown into the cistern all of you would have laughed just as hard."

"I don't care, they are all down on me?" grumbled Hockley.

"I believe you only imagine it. Come, we will find some place where you can wash up and have your clothing dried."

"I'll go back to the hotel and change my clothing. I don't want to see the caves."

Hockley was obdurate, and in the end he was allowed to depart, after having washed up in a nearby hut. A native conducted him back to the city, so that he might not lose his way. Once at the hotel he lost no time in getting some liquor and a package of cigarettes, and, in the privacy of a room the party had engaged, lay down to read another "thriller" he had purchased before leaving Havana. But he was full of bitterness, and his resolve to "fix" the others was greater than ever.

The trip to the Caves of Bellamar proved of interest to the boys, who brought with them upon their return a number of specimens of beautifully colored

stones to be found there. While in the caves they had great sport with the echoes, and the guide pointed out to them a spot in which over a hundred Cubans had been imprisoned and starved to death in years gone by, during one of the awful uprisings in that part of the island.

When the boys got back to Matanzas they were glad enough to rest in the patio of the hotel before attempting to re-arrange their toilets and dine. Mark and Frank sank into one hammock and Darry and Sam in another, while Professor Strong rested in an easy chair not far away.

While they were resting, Hockley, whose room was directly above the patio, heard them talking, and their apparent happiness caused a sour look to spread over his face.

"If only they had gone into that cistern instead of me!" he muttered to himself, and then his eyes rested on a bowl of dirty water he had left on the washstand. "Just the thing!" he added. "I'll see how they like it."

To catch up the bowl of dirty water was but the work of an instant and he crossed to the window under which the boys were sitting. But then he paused.

"If I throw it from here, they'll know I did it," he reasoned. "I'll go into the hallway."

The hallway led around a corner, and here was another window, also opening upon the courtyard. The place was deserted and the window was wide open. Looking to make sure that he was not observed, Hockley threw the water out and then turned and ran with all speed for his own room. He put the bowl where it belonged, went outside again, locked the door, and ran down the front stairs, leading to the hotel reading room.

The bully's aim was true, and the scattering water covered all four of the boys pretty thoroughly, and even the professor did not escape entirely.

"My gracious, what's this!" spluttered Mark, who caught some in his eyes. "Who threw that water down on me?"

He leaped up and so did the others. They gazed up at the hall window but could see nobody. Yet they knew that it had come from there and in the mind of each rushed the same thought:

"Hockley!"

"Of course he did it!" cried Darry, brushing off his shoulders. "He wants to pay us for laughing at him."

"I'll pay him!" returned Sam, and made a dash for the doorway of the hotel, before Professor Strong could stop him. The others came behind, the professor calling out that they must behave themselves.

It puzzled them greatly to find the door to the room locked. They pounded in vain and then had to wait until Professor Strong opened the door to the apartment adjoining. Then they passed through a connecting door.

"Nobody here," said Sam, staring around. "If he did it he got out in mighty quick order."

"Nobody in the hall," came from Mark, who had taken a look around. "But I don't believe a servant would have thrown that water into the garden."

"The wash bowl is empty and the pitcher is less than half full," came from Frank. "The pitcher was full when we left—the servant just came and filled it."

"Let's look for Hockley," was Darry's advice, but fearing a bitter quarrel and perhaps a fight, the professor told them to leave the big youth alone and prepare themselves for supper. As all were more than ordinarily hungry, this changed the current of their thoughts and they did as requested.

When they entered the dining hall they found Hockley waiting for them. He put on an injured air.

"Thought you were never coming to dine," he grumbled. "Next time I guess I'll eat alone."

"You may, Jacob, if you feel too hungry to wait," answered the professor.

"Say, Hockley, did you—" began Mark, when Frank pinched his arm.

"Don't let on," whispered Frank to his chum. "If he doesn't know anything about it don't give him the chance to laugh at us."

"Did I what?" questioned the bully.

"Oh, it doesn't matter," answered Mark, unconcernedly.

And there, for the time being, the affair rested.

CHAPTER XVI

GOOD-BYE TO CUBA

FROM Matanzas the party journeyed to Cardenas, where a day was spent in sight-seeing, and then took the train for Santa Clara, stopping off for two hours at the city of Colon. The route now lay around some lofty mountains and the scenery was grand in consequence. Two days were spent at Santa Clara and then they moved on to Cienfuegos on the south coast.

"Cienfuegos means the City of a Hundred Fires," said Professor Strong. "Why it is called that I cannot tell excepting it may be on account of volcanic actions of years ago. It is probably the most up-to-date city in Cuba and will be still better after the sanitary arrangements have been completed."

"Wasn't there some sort of a fight off Cienfuegos during the late war?" questioned Sam.

"Yes. Some of our warships went in to cut the cables lying on the harbor bottom and the Spanish

soldiers gave them battle. It was a hot contest, but it did not last very long."

The boys found Cienfuegos fully as up-to-date as the professor had said it was. To be sure there were many narrow streets and not a few old buildings, but the general appearance was far superior to that of many towns through which they had passed. There were many fine public buildings and a nice park, where a fountain played and where a band held forth in the cool of the evening. The natives, too, were well dressed, even the children wearing shoes and stockings, articles usually lacking at places in the interior.

"Don't see youngsters half dressed here," remarked Frank. "It's awful how they let 'em run around at some villages. They ought to be ashamed."

"It's what they have been brought up to, Frank," returned Mark. "They don't look at it as anything of a disgrace. Our own Indians didn't use to wear much, and now look at them. Why, Darry told me he saw some at an agency in the far West wearing patent leather boots and stove-pipe hats."

"I guess Darry was drawing on his imagination," laughed Frank. "But I know they dress

well, some of them. I've seen them up at St. Regis, in New York state."

At Cienfuegos passage was obtained on the *City of Madrid* for Santiago de Cuba. Before purchasing his steamer tickets the professor made certain that the accommodations would be first-class, so that the party would experience no such trouble as had fallen to their lot on board of the *Chester*.

"That's right," said Sam, in speaking of the matter to Amos Strong. "One such experience is enough. I wonder if we'll ever set eyes on Captain Sudlip again."

"I hope not, Samuel. The less we fall in with such people the better off we will be."

"I believe you, sir. He and that Dan Markel would make a team for meanness."

"Wonder if we'll ever see Markel again," remarked Frank.

"Don't want to see him," growled Hockley.

"We don't, that's a fact," put in Mark, yet they were to see the man from Baltimore, and under very peculiar circumstances.

Now that they had spent over two weeks on land the boys did not object to going on shipboard once more. The run eastward along the coast of Cuba

to Santiago Bay would take a little over two days, the distance being little less than four hundred miles, around Cape Cruz.

"We will not run close to shore," said the professor. "If you will look at the map you will see that there are many islands here, and also many keys, as they are called—little islands. The channels are dangerous, too, but especially in a storm."

"I hope we don't get any storm," said Darry.

His wish was fulfilled and the trip to Santiago passed off without anything out of the ordinary happening. The *City of Madrid* proved an old but very comfortable steamer, and the meals served were more than satisfactory.

"There is where the *Merrimac* was sunk by Lieutenant Hobson," said the professor, as they passed the spot, in the channel leading from the Caribbean Sea to Santiago Bay. "Hobson and his brave men were fired upon from half a dozen points about here and in spite of all they could do were finally caught and placed under arrest."

"But they were afterwards released," put in Frank. "It was a daring thing to do, that's sure."

They found Santiago very much like other Cuban cities they had visited. But the recent rule by

United States authority was very much in evidence and even the side streets, unusually narrow, were clean and orderly. Santiago lies near the head of the bay, on the eastern shore, and in the distance they could see the hills of El Caney and San Juan, made famous in the Spanish-American war by Roosevelt's Rough Riders and others of Uncle Sam's soldier boys. Coming up the coast from Cape Cruz they had already had pointed out to them the spots where the Spanish warships had either been sunk or run ashore by our warships under Commodores Sampson and Schley.

"It must have been a great victory," said Darry, when they were touring the city. "How scared the people must have been when they were told that our troops were pressing in on them."

"The fortifications were several miles outside of the city limits," returned the professor. "But gradually, after the fall of the blockhouses at El Caney and San Juan, our troops hemmed the Spaniards in closer and closer, and then there was, of course, much anxiety. You see, the Spanish soldiers were in a bad situation, for even the citizens of the town were largely against them and hoped for a Yankee victory."

Among the places of interest visited were the prisons in which our captured soldiers and sailors had been kept. Some of the underground dungeons made them shudder.

"Cubans were kept here as well as our people," said Professor Strong. "Some of the Cuban rebels, as they were called, were held in solitary confinement for years. It was horrible, and it is a grand good thing that Spain's hold on this island has at last been broken."

In Santiago they saw something which they had already noted in other towns but which nevertheless made them laugh again and again. This was a milkman driving his cows through the street and crying: "Milk for sale! Good milk for sale!" in Spanish. When somebody wanted milk the vendor would stop one of his cows, take the bowl or shell brought to him, and milk out as much of the lacteal fluid as was desired.

"Anyway, they get it fresh," was Frank's comment, when talking of the matter. "They can't adulterate it either."

The boys had thought to spend several days in Santiago, which is the capital city of the Eastern Department of Cuba, but Professor Strong learned

that a particularly good steamer would sail for Cape Haytien in Hayti and San Juan, Porto Rico, on the day following, and he resolved to take this, so a talked-of ride into the interior had to be given up.

"Never mind," said Amos Strong. "When we get to Porto Rico we will take the long ride over the old military road from San Juan to Ponce. That will give you a good idea of rural life in the West Indies. If we miss this steamer there is no telling when we will get one quite so good."

"Oh, let's go on by all means," put in Hockley. "Santiago is too dead slow for me. It's a good deal like all the rest of Cuba."

"Oh, Jake, you want to wake up!" cried Sam, impulsively. "I haven't heard you say a good word for any of the places. To me they are all full of interest. We are learning a great deal by traveling around."

"Now don't preach!" interrupted the lank youth. "I know what I am doing." And then he continued, as the professor turned away: "It would be all right if we had a lively crowd along and if a fellow could do as he pleased when it came to sport. But as it is——" And he ended with a shrug of his shoulders.

That very night, as Hockley was walking along the street, he passed a ship's chandlery and in the window saw a sign, "Pitch for Sale." Struck by a sudden idea after he had gone by, he retraced his steps and entered the shop, and asked the price of the pitch. It was cheap enough and he soon had about a pint in his possession, done up securely in a tin can and wrapped in a heavy paper. He secreted the bundle under his coat.

The idea that had entered his mind was not wholly original with him. In one of the cheap novels he had read, "Pete Prankley, the Sassiest Boy in Saw-town," Pete, the hero had had no end of fun by putting pitch into his father's shoes at home and on the minister's seat at church. It was a roaring good joke, according to Hockley's notion, and to play something like that on the other boys would be just the thing.

But how could he do it without being detected? It might prove easy enough to get the pitch into the shoes without being seen, but if all the crowd suffered but himself they would surely lay the blame on him, and he had no idea of making himself suffer with them.

"Oh, I've got it!" he exclaimed at last, when he

had cudgeled his brain for over an hour. "Just the thing! I'll have my revenge on all of them, and one of them will catch it for keeps, too! It's the best plan yet!"

And he almost fell to hugging himself with delight.

CHAPTER XVII

A JOKE ON SHIPBOARD

THE steamer *Clarissa*, on which the boys now found themselves, was of the old-fashioned type, broad of beam and of rather light draught. But she was a very comfortable craft and after spending a day on board they were glad that Professor Strong had secured passage on her.

There were among the passengers half a dozen Americans, bound for San Juan, so the trip was more lively than those before taken. In the crowd were several good piano players, and as the saloon of the *Clarissa* boasted of a fairly good piano there was a good deal of music, especially during the evening. All the boys could sing, and none of them were "backward about coming forward," as Darry expressed it. Even Hockley sang, for he had a fair voice and loved to show it off at the least opportunity.

"One of the passengers tells me that Hayti is a

great place for revolutions," said Mark to the professor, on the morning of the second day out.

"Hayti has been a hot-bed of revolutions for years," answered Amos Strong, "and even to-day matters are far from settled there. At one time the island, which contains about twenty-eight thousand miles of territory and a population of 1,300,000 souls, was under a single government, but to-day it is divided into Hayti and Santo Domingo. The great majority of the inhabitants are black, and the whites have, in consequence, had a hard time of it. The French buccaneers used to make Hayti a stopping place and they had many a fierce fight with the blacks, and there was a continual struggle between the blacks that were slaves and their masters."

"I don't imagine it is a nice place to visit," put in Frank, who was listening to the talk.

"There are many better places, I admit. Yet, as it is right on our way we can very well stop off a day at Cape Haytien and take a look around."

"Somebody said they had earthquakes there," put in Sam.

"All these islands are of volcanic origin and earthquakes are frequent. Hayti has a mountain range from one end almost to the other, and one

peak, Cibao, is seven thousand feet high. The mountains are covered with valuable timber and the island exports large quantities of mahogany and other woods. The mountains are, like those north of Santiago de Cuba, full of rich minerals, but so far only a few mines have been opened."

Directly after this conversation the professor brought out his largest map of the islands and the boys looked it over with care. They found that Hayti lay about equally distant from Cuba and Porto Rico. On the west was the Windward Passage, separating it from Cuba, and on the east the Mona Passage, separating it from Porto Rico.

"The Mona Passage," mused Sam, "That's the Monkey Passage, that we passed through on our way from New York to Venezuela."

"I see Port-au-Prince is the capital city," remarked Frank. "But that is about a hundred miles south of our stopping place."

The evening proved a most delightful one and nobody thought of going to bed until a late hour. As a consequence hardly any of the boys felt like arising early, and it was not until the breakfast gong had sounded the second time that Mark and Frank leaped up.

"I didn't know it was so late!" exclaimed Frank, as he glanced at his watch, and then he fairly flew into his clothing, and so did Mark.

They had just slipped on their shoes when there came a knock on the stateroom door and they admitted Sam.

"See here, who put this stuff in my shoes—" began Sam, when he noticed Mark kicking his foot on a locker. Then Frank did the same. A moment later they were sitting down trying to pull off their shoes, which refused to budge.

"By cracky! I can't do a thing with mine!" puffed Mark. "Whatever has gotten into them?"

"It's pitch, that's what it is," growled Sam. "Here is some on the tongue of my shoe. I can't budge my feet."

"And the stuff smarts like mischief," came from Frank. "Say, do you know what I think?" he went on.

"It's a joke of Hockley's," came from both of the others.

"Exactly."

"If it is, we'll pay him back with interest," said Mark, grimly.

The pitch was of the extra sticky kind and clung

to them like fish glue. They stamped and kicked, pulled and hauled, but all to no purpose.

The uproar was so great that Professor Strong came to the stateroom to see what was the matter. In the meantime Hockley heard the rumpus and smiled broadly.

"It worked!" he murmured. "Now wait until the finish!"

The finish was not long in coming. There was a tramping of feet before the door and a knock from Professor Strong.

"Yes, sir, coming!" called out Hockley, sleepily.

"Hockley, did you put pitch into the other boys' shoes?" demanded Amos Strong, sternly.

"Me? Pitch?" asked the lank youth, in pretended astonishment. "I don't know what you are talking about."

"The other boys' shoes are filled with pitch."

Hockley walked across the floor and picked up his own shoes.

"So are mine, sir. Somebody has played a trick on me!" He flung the door open. "See here, I ain't going to stand this?" he roared, in assumed anger. "It's a jolly shame! This pair of shoes cost me ten dollars!" And he shook his head savagely.

"We're all in the same boat," said Mark, helplessly. The fact that Hockley had been treated like the others puzzled him a good deal.

Professor Strong looked into Hockley's shoes. True enough each contained pitch, although not very much and what there was did not stick very fast.

"This is certainly mysterious—" began the professor, and at that moment Darry came up, he having gone to the dining room to look for them.

"Why don't you come to breakfast," he said. "I'm as hungry as a bear."

"Have you pitch in your shoes?" came from the other boys.

"Pitch? What do you mean?" queried Darry, innocently.

"We've all got pitch in our shoes, and it hurts like creation!" spluttered Frank, and began to work at the foot coverings once more, while Mark and Sam did the same.

"Pitch," repeated Darry, and then as the humor of the situation dawned on him he laughed loudly. "Well, this is rich! All stuck, eh, like flies on fly-paper. Ha! ha! ha! You won't get your shoes

off for a week!" And he burst into another fit of laughter.

"I'll bet he did it," cried Hockley. "If I can prove it I'll make you buy me a new pair of shoes!" And he shook the shoes in Darry's face.

Darry was in particularly good humor that morning, and he could hardly control himself. He gazed at one and another, tugging at the refractory foot coverings, and fairly shook with laughter. In the midst of this Professor Strong caught him by the arm.

"Is this some of your work, Dartworth?" he questioned.

"My work? Why—er—no, sir."

"It is—he needn't deny it," put in Hockley. "I saw him with some pitch yesterday."

This was true, for Darry had picked up a small ball of the stuff which Hockley had placed where he knew the other lad would be certain to see it. And now the professor remembered seeing the pitch, too.

"This is not the kind of a joke I like," said Amos Strong, severely. "I thought better of you, Crane. These boys will have hard work to get themselves free of the mess."

"I've got one foot out!" cried Mark, and out it came, but minus the sock, which was left where it had stuck.

The others were working with a will and at last they got free of both shoes and socks, and then Professor Strong sent them back to their staterooms to don other foot coverings. Having looked into his own stateroom he found his shoes also full of the pitch, which he had escaped by putting on a pair of traveling slippers.

"I will not have such jokes played," he said, when he encountered Darry once more. "You should be above it. If such a thing happens again I shall have to punish you."

"I didn't—" began Darry, and then shut his mouth hard. Even though ordinarily light-hearted, Darry had a temper, and now it began to rise at this unjust accusation. The professor looked at him and he looked at the professor, and then they separated.

But little was said at the breakfast table, but once a glance passed between Darry and Hockley which was far from friendly. The meal was soon over, and then Mark, Frank and Sam followed Darry to his stateroom.

"Look here, Darry, we want to know the truth of this," began Mark, when the door was shut. "Did you do this, or didn't you?"

Darry began to whistle and looked at the ceiling.

"If you think I did it why do you ask me?" he snapped at last.

"Well—er—Hockley says you had the pitch."

"I'll take Darry's word every time," put in Sam, who saw that a crisis was at hand.

"So will I," added Frank.

"I'm not holding back," put in Mark, hastily. "Even if he did do it, it was only a joke. But if he didn't do it, we ought to know it and lay for the joker. I won't stand for such a joke from anybody outside of our crowd."

"Would you take such a joke from me?" demanded Darry, suddenly, and now he looked one and another full in the face.

"Yes," came in a chorus.

Darry looked relieved.

"Well then, I didn't do it, and I don't know who did."

It was Frank who caught his hand first, but Sam and Mark were not much slower.

"We knew it!" they cried.

“Nobody in this crowd would play a joke on the rest!” added Sam.

“But who did do it?” queried Frank. “It wasn’t Hockley, for he was dosed, too.”

“Don’t you be so sure about Hockley,” put in Darry. “I was thinking it over at the table. He had pitch in his shoes, but he didn’t put those shoes on, and I’ll wager he gets the pitch out easily.”

“Then you think it was he after all?” queried Mark.

“I don’t know what to think. But he’ll bear watching, according to my notion.”

“Let’s search his room,” suggested Frank. “We may find some evidence against him.”

This was considered a good idea and Frank went out, to come back a minute later and report the coast clear. Then they hurried to Hockley’s stateroom, and began a quick search around.

“Whoop, I’ve got it!” ejaculated Mark, drawing a can from a corner under the berth. “Pitch, as sure as you are born!”

“Come out of that!” sang out Darry, who was gazing down the stateroom corridor. “Hockley is coming.”

“Put the can back and don’t let on we know

about it," said Sam. And this was done, and they escaped from the stateroom just in the nick of time. Then they returned to their own quarters and all four of the boys set to work to clean out the be-pitched shoes.

"We must get square for this," said Frank. "To let it pass unnoticed would be criminal."

"Right you are," responded Darry. "And as he did his best to place the blame on me I claim the honor for hatching out the plot to even up."

"But we are going to help," put in Sam; and so it was agreed.

CHAPTER XVIII

HAYTI, SUGAR MAKING, AND ANOTHER JOKE

THE weather remained all that could be desired, and the run to Cape Haytien was made without special incident. Darry did his best to hatch out something against Hockley but no opportunity occurred for "squaring up" as the boys called it. Perhaps Professor Strong suspected that something was afloat, for he kept a close watch on all his charges.

He no longer suspected Darry of being the author of the pitch joke, for Mark and Frank had told him that Darry had said he was innocent, and he had always found the fun-loving lad truthful. The boys had said nothing of finding the can in Hockley's stateroom,—that was their own secret.

The harbor of Cape Haytien is rather a difficult one to enter, on account of the many reefs and shoals in that vicinity, but the bay upon which the town is located is a fine one, being encircled by many hills, covered with forests of various hues.

"This isn't so bad," observed Mark, on landing. "It's a good deal cleaner than I thought."

"Cape Haytien has quite a commerce with the United States," said Professor Strong. "Sugar and molasses are staples here. If you wish we can visit a sugar works and see how the toothsome article and molasses are made."

"I don't like molasses," said Hockley. "It's too common. I always take honey on my buckwheat cakes," and then everybody laughed.

"There are a good many ruins here," went on Professor Strong. "They are due to the bombardment which the town sustained at the hands of the British, in 1865, and to other outbreaks, and earthquakes. The inhabitants number about twenty-five thousand. There is a cathedral here, and also several public buildings, which are worth visiting."

Having but a single day ashore, they hired a carriage and took a long drive around, passing several large and well-kept squares, and also the soldiers' barracks, the post-office, and other points of interest. Then they drove out to a plantation noted for its fine grade of sugar and molasses.

"As all of you know," said Professor Strong, while waiting for an attendant to take them around,

"Sugar in the West Indies is made almost wholly from the sugar cane, which is cut down when it is ripe and hauled to the mills. The mills are of all sorts, from the most primitive of old Spanish days to the up-to-date American mill which costs many thousands of dollars to erect.

"The process of manufacturing sugar and refining it is a complicated one as carried on to-day, yet the principle of making sugar is very simple. The cane is fed between large iron or steel rollers, weighing ten or twelve tons. The rollers run very slowly and every bit of the juice of the cane is squeezed out of it. This juice is then brought gradually to a boil and all the foreign matter is either skimmed off or the clear fluid is drawn away from underneath. Then what is left is boiled again until the sugar begins to separate from the molasses. The last boiling is a very delicate process and only workers of long experience can make really good sugar. From being a thin kind of syrup the sugar gradually becomes like porridge and thicker, and it is then run off into forms, containing one or two hundred pounds. From these forms runs the syrup not yet crystalized, and this is either boiled up once more or rejected and barreled as molasses."

"Then molasses is really sugar that won't get hard," said Frank.

"That is about it, Frank, although there are different kinds of molasses. Cheap molasses has less of the sugary element left in it than that of a high grade. The very best of molasses is not called molasses at all but treacle. This is made, not during ordinary sugar making, but while the sugar is being refined or manufactured into fancy forms. Treacle is much used in England."

They were soon shown through the sugar mill, and watched with interest the huge rollers squeezing out the juice of the cane, which looked dark and dirty. At one place they saw bullock's blood poured in to help cleanse it of impurities, and they saw long rows of pots with the sugar being passed from one to another in the clarifying process, and also saw a huge vacuum pan, where the sugar could be brought to a boil at a low degree of heat.

"Too much heat spoil de sugar," explained the attendant. "Sugar best like dis," and he put his hand into the syrup and withdrew it and then spread out two fingers, showing the gummy liquid expanded like thin rubber. Then he led them to where

sugar was being made into fancy squares and other forms.

"A good part of the sugar is sent to our country in its raw state," said the professor, as they were coming away from the mill. "It is refined at large refineries, where the proprietors make a specialty of catering to our own peculiar tastes. Some time ago I saw a statement printed that Americans use more sugar per capita than any other nation, and I believe it is true."

"Sure," said Darry. "And you know why? Because the girls eat so many caramels and so much fudge."

"And because some boys like their coffee and tea doubly sweet," returned the professor, dryly, and then a laugh went up, for all knew this was one of Darry's weaknesses.

They had put in what Mark called "a big day," and all were glad enough to go back to the steamer by nightfall. In the evening Cape Haytien is a dull place, poorly lighted, and with only a few amusements, and those usually of the commoner sort. But before coming away they listened to a number of natives who played guitars and sang, and the music was exceedingly sweet.

The following day found the *Clarissa* leaving the harbor and turning eastward for Porto Rico. So far the weather had been fine, but now the sky began to cloud over, showing that a tropical storm was approaching.

"I hope we don't catch much of it," said Frank to Darry. "I've had enough of that sort of thing."

"I should like to see a little storm, and that at night," answered Darry.

"A little storm at night? What for?"

"So I can pay Hockley for the trick he played us."

"But I don't understand, Darry."

"You will understand, if the storm comes," answered the light-hearted lad, but would say no more.

A little later Frank met Sam and Mark and told them of what Darry had said.

"He's got something up his sleeve," said Mark. "Well, we promised to let him have his inning first, so let him do as he pleases."

By nightfall the storm was close at hand and the rain kept them in the cabin. There was considerable wind, but the officers of the ship assured the passengers that there was no danger.

Hockley read for an hour and then declared his

intention of going to bed. He had hardly disappeared when Darry followed, but first told his chums to watch for fun.

It was raining hard when Hockley turned in. Truth to tell the rolling and pitching of the ship had made him somewhat sick and he had retired partly to avoid the others, for he knew they might laugh at him. But he was a good sleeper and soon he was slumbering soundly.

In the meantime Darry was not idle. From a stateroom he obtained a large basin of water. Then he hunted up a couple of cheap glass tumblers and placed them in the foot of an old sock. Thus armed he crept to Hockley's door. It was unfastened, and the snoring of the lank youth told him that the time was ripe for what he intended to do.

Bang! the door flew open with a crash, arousing Hockley on the instant. As he sat up in the berth a dash of water landed on his head and ran down his spinal column. Then came a crash of glass that made him jump.

"All hands on deck!" he heard a hoarse voice cry. "The ship is sinking!" And then came another crash of glass and more water hit him in the face.

Confused, and almost scared out of his wits, the bully gave one bound that took him half way across the stateroom floor. He caught up his trousers and slipped them on. "We are going down!" he groaned. "Oh, why did I ever leave land!" And then, as the steamer gave a lurch, he caught up the rest of his clothing and made for the corridor, down which he bolted like lightning and up the stairs leading to the main deck. Reaching this he glared around, blinking in the light.

"What—who—what shall we do?" he demanded of the first passenger he met, a rather fussy old gentleman who did not like boys.

"Do?" demanded the old gentleman. He adjusted his eyeglasses and stared at Hockley. "Why, young man, what is the matter with you? Have you gone crazy?"

"Ain't the ship sinking?" gasped Hockley.

"Not that I am aware of."

"But—er—" The youth gazed around him in amazement. Nobody appeared to be excited, and some folks were even at the piano, playing and singing. Then he caught sight of Darry and the other boys, who were behind a nearby column and laughing heartily.

"Hi! what are you laughing at?" he roared, rushing toward the crowd. "I want to know——"

"Glummy must have been dreaming the ship was going to sink," came from Mark.

"And he wasn't going to leave his shoes behind either," put in Frank, pointing to the pair the bully carried in his hand.

"Nor his collar and tie," added Sam. "Nothing like being dressed up, even if you're swimming for your life."

"I won't stand this—I'll fix all of you, see if I don't!" howled Hockley, shaking his fists at them and dropping half of his wearing apparel in his excitement. "I'll—I'll——" And then he suddenly thought of the figure he cut, and the crowd that was beginning to gather, and ran for his state-room with as much speed as he had used in leaving it.

He was in too much of a rage to retire again, and as soon as he had dressed he came out to hunt up the boys. They were waiting for him, fearful that he would inform Professor Strong of the affair. Fortunately the professor had been in the smoking room at the time and he as yet knew nothing of what had occurred.

"See here," began Hockley. "I want to know who played that trick on me."

"I don't think you'll find out," answered Mark.

"I'm going to tell the professor. My berth is soaked with water and I came pretty close to cutting my foot on a piece of glass on the floor."

"Didn't step into any pitch, did you?" asked Sam, dryly.

"I say I am going to tell the professor," went on Hockley, working himself up into a magnificent rage.

"I don't think you will tell him," answered Darry, steadily. "You thought it a fine thing to put off that pitch joke on my shoulders, didn't you? Now I guess I've paid you back, so we are quits."

"So you did it?" howled Hockley. "I'm going to Professor Strong this minute and show him the berth——"

"If you do I'll show him something else."

"What?"

"The can you had full of pitch. We found it, and all can testify it was under your berth. Maybe the professor won't be angry at your duplicity in that affair, Glummy. The best thing you can do is to drop the matter and call it square."

At these words Hockley's face grew dark and full of resentment.

"I'll never drop it, never!" he exclaimed, vehemently. "You are all against me! But I shan't stand it. Just wait until we are on shore and I'll show you what I can do!"

And with this he turned off on his heel and left them.

CHAPTER XIX

A TALK ABOUT PORTO RICO

"HE's down on us now, if he never was before," was Sam's comment, after Hockley had disappeared.

"But he won't go to Professor Strong with his tale of woe," put in Mark. "When Darry spoke of the can of pitch he was scared and showed it."

"He knew it was mean to put off that joke on me," said Darry. And then he added: "I don't think my joke was such a brilliant affair, but I reckon it squared accounts."

He had to go into the details of what he had done, and the boys had another laugh, for boys are but boys, and it had been fun to see the bully dancing around in such alarm.

By morning the storm was over and the sun came out so fiercely that all were glad enough to remain in the shade of the awning spread over the forward deck, where a little breeze was blowing.

"We are now in the track of Columbus on his first voyage to the New World," said Professor

Strong. "He sailed across this very spot a little over four hundred and eight years ago."

"What tremendous changes since then," said Sam. "He found our own States inhabited by Indians and now a good many of our inhabitants have never seen an Indian, outside of a Wild West show or a circus."

"Yes, the march of progress has been great, Samuel, and I do not doubt but what it will be still greater in the future. We are coming to a point where everything seems possible, even to wireless telephones and practical airships."

During the afternoon the professor called the boys together in a quiet corner of the cabin and hung up a large map of Porto Rico.

"I want all of you to know something about this new territory of the United States before we visit it," he said, when they had settled themselves. "To us it is, just at present, the most important of the West Indies."

"It doesn't look very large," said Hockley, gazing rather blankly at the map.

"The island is about a hundred miles long, east and west, and about thirty-five miles wide, north

and south. It is almost rectangular in shape, as you can see, and contains about 3,600 square miles of territory."

"It looks to be mountainous," came from Mark.

"There is a range of mountains running from one end of the island to the other. The average height is fifteen hundred feet but one peak is three-quarters of a mile high. Between the mountains are many well-watered valleys and here the soil is remarkably productive."

"I've heard of Porto Rico tobacco," came from Darry.

"Yes, large quantities of very fine tobacco are raised there, and also sugar, coffee, cattle and hides. In years gone by they also raised a superior kind of cotton, but that industry does not appear to be flourishing just now."

"I've heard that they used to have lots of slaves here," came from Frank.

"Yes, Porto Rico did have its full share of slaves, and the Spanish plantation owners were very cruel to them. Slavery flourished until 1873, when the last of the poor blacks, numbering probably twenty thousand souls, were freed. All told, there are now

about a million people on the island, and the majority of them are blacks or of mixed Spanish and black blood."

"I thought there were a great many folks here from the United States," said Mark.

"People are coming in by every steamer, and it will not be long before Porto Rico will have all the Yankees it can profitably use. Then first-class railroads will be built and the mines developed, and some day the island will find itself rich."

"Aren't there any railroads now?" asked Hockley.

"Yes, but they do not amount to a great deal. Along the north shore there is a line from San Juan to Hatillo, on the west coast one from Aguadilla to Mayaguez, and on the south shore one from Yauco to Ponce, and that is all, so far as I know. There is none in the east, where one is badly needed, and none from the north side of the island to the south side. The only means of communication between San Juan, the principal city on the north, to Ponce, the capital on the south, is by means of the great military highway, which I mentioned to you before, and which was built years ago. This highway runs in an irregular course around the mountains and

over the hills, and connects half a dozen important inland cities with the seacoast. What those cities are we shall see when we ride over the road from San Juan to Ponce, a distance of seventy-five miles or more.

“Unlike Cuba and Jamaica, Porto Rico has a great number of rivers and many of these are deep, so that ships of fair size can sail upon them. The water is very pure and some of it is shipped to other islands for drinking purposes.

“The raising of cattle and sheep forms an important industry and is carried on with ease, for there are no wild animals to molest the stock and very little disease.”

“No wild animals?” repeated Frank, and his face fell. “That means no hunting.”

“You are right, Frank. About the only wild animals I ever saw on the island were pigs and dogs. Under the old Spanish rule,” continued the professor, “matters were carried with a high hand by the government. The people were taxed outrageously and received little or nothing in return. Everything was taxed, even to a dancing party, and to prevent a revolution there was a law forbidding more than nineteen people to assemble at a given

place without a special license or else the representative of the government had to be present. What few schools the people had were only such in name, and all citizens who could afford it sent their sons and daughters off to be educated. Newspapers were of the poorest and I never heard of but one magazine, which was worse than those sold for five cents at home. Those who owned slaves treated them horribly, and the slaves would often retaliate by misusing the horses, mules and cattle, and to-day horses are misused there shamefully."

"I saw a picture of an ox cart," said Mark. "Do they use them in Porto Rico?"

"Yes, they use all sorts of carts drawn by oxen, and the poor beasts are driven along by having goads prodded into them, so that the blood streams from them. But under our rule all these cruelties will some day cease.

"Strictly speaking, there is very little poverty in the island, for a person can live on very little. The climate is such that but scant clothing is required, and fruit and vegetables are exceedingly cheap. Any kind of a hut does for a shelter, and nothing has to be spent for fuel or light. If a native owns a little garden patch, and a few chickens and a cow,

he can get along without any trouble, even though the whole outfit may not be worth a hundred dollars."

"It must be lazy man's land," laughed Darry.

"To a certain extent it is, and many of the Porto Ricans have the old Spanish habit of putting off till to-morrow what should be done to-day. They lie around and smoke cigarettes, and arrange for cock fights, which are here, as in other islands, the national amusement. Years ago they used to have bull fights, but that is a thing of the past."

The talk now became general, and the boys and the professor spent a good hour over the map, noting the position of the various towns and rivers, bays and mountains. The professor told a story about getting lost on a strange road, and of how he had seen a ghost which proved to be nothing but swamp-damp.

"When I finally got back to the road and told a native of this, he said the swamp-damp came from the bodies of brave soldiers who had died in battle," concluded Amos Strong.

The entrance to San Juan harbor is a difficult one and steamers must be piloted in with great care. But once inside there is a fine anchorage, two miles

wide by three miles long, situated on the south side of the city. Along this shore are located the governor's castle, the soldiers' barracks, the custom house, and a large number of warehouses and other buildings. On the north side of the city is a finely-kept cemetery and also another soldiers' barracks.

"This city is really on an island," said the professor, when they found themselves landed, the day after the talk above mentioned. "It is a long, narrow peninsula, separated from the mainland by a shallow body of water spanned by the San Antonio bridge. As you can see, it is inclosed by a high wall, which gives it the appearance of being what it really is, an old Spanish town. The castle you see on the bluff is Morro Castle, which played an important part during the War with Spain, just as did Morro Castle at Havana."

The streets were alive with people, and the boys were surprised to see how many were Americans. English signs were everywhere in evidence, and one reading, "Shooting Gallery, 3 Shots for 5 Cents," made Darry laugh.

"We are in an American town now for sure," he observed. "You'd never see such a sign elsewhere."

"To be sure we are on United States soil," cried Frank. "Hurrah for Porto Rico and its people!"

He had scarcely spoken when a hack driver rushed up to them.

"This way, gents!" he bawled. "Any hotel in the city. Take the six of you for a dollar! Best keb in the city!"

"Well!" ejaculated Mark, stopping short. "That sounds as if we had struck the Grand Central Depot in New York."

"Oh, they are going to be up-to-date," laughed the professor. "No, we may as well walk to the hotel and see the sights on the way," he added, and shook his head at the cabman, and also at the crowd of native drivers who swarmed around them.

"I see they have gas and telephones," said Sam.

"Yes, and also electric lights, Samuel—in fact they now have everything which you will find in any well-kept town in the States."

"But the streets are narrow," put in Frank.

"Only in the old part."

The houses were of stone and brick, painted various colors. The majority were of the old Spanish style of architecture, with small windows and flat roofs. Here and there was a new building, looking

strangely out of place, with its wide windows and broad balconies.

Professor Strong had a friend in the hotel business in San Juan, and to his place, called the Randall House, they made their way. It proved to be a comfortable hostelry, and they were assigned three spacious rooms on the second floor. From the roof of the hotel a splendid view of the entire city could be obtained, and here the boys spent some time, while the professor and the hotel proprietor pointed out various points of interest to them.

CHAPTER XX

AN ADVENTURE IN THE MOUNTAINS

THREE days passed swiftly by. There was much to be seen in San Juan, and the boys were out most of the time, only resting during the middle of the day, when the heat was too much for them.

During these days they visited various public buildings and also the main college and two of the principal churches. They learned that the city had seven parks, and in one, the Plazuela de Santiago, they saw a life-like statue of Columbus. They also visited the governor's palace, built by Ponce de Leon, and the Santa Catalina fortifications. But what interested them more than anything was the small, huddled up native shops, with their quaint keepers and their grand mixture of merchandise, and the still more strange markets, with many vegetables and fruits new to them. To these shops came the native ladies, but they never dismounted from their carriages but made the shop-keepers bring out everything to them.

"They try to live as lazy and easy a life as they can," was Mark's comment. "How American energy must open their eyes."

"The professor told me that San Juan used to be an awfully dirty town," said Sam. "But as soon as our soldiers took hold they made the citizens clean up, and the place has been kept clean ever since. That helps to lessen disease and is certainly a blessing."

During the stay in San Juan all the boys received letters from home, and one which Hockley got contained a money order which pleased him greatly. He had written that he must have money, that Professor Strong would allow him next to nothing, and his over-indulgent father had relented and sent him two hundred dollars.

"Now I'll have some good times," the bully told himself. "And the rest of the fellows can go to grass."

The letters received by Mark and Frank contained news of unusual interest to them. It was to the effect that Mr. Newton and Mr. Robertson had started for the West Indies on a trip combining business with pleasure. They intended to stop off at Kingston, Jamaica, and were then going to St.

Pierre, Martinique, and to Kingstown, on the island of St. Vincent. The business was one connected with the importation of certain dyes and coloring matters which the dry goods importer was anxious to obtain.

"I wish we could meet them down here!" cried Frank, enthusiastically, when telling the others the news.

"Perhaps we'll meet them at St. Pierre," said the professor. "I had planned to take you down there after our trip overland to Ponce. You wanted to see an extinct volcano and there is a large one there called Mont Pelee, only a few miles from the city."

"Just the thing!" burst out Mark. "Let us write letters at once and send them to St. Pierre, so our fathers will be sure to get them on their arrival." And the letters were sent without delay.

Two days later found them on the ancient military road which runs from San Juan to Ponce. The direct distance from the principal seaport on the north to the capital city on the south is only forty-five miles, but the road is a winding one, running from village to village and town to town, and by this the journey becomes almost twice as long. At many points the way is exceedingly hilly, so that fast

traveling, especially in the hot sun, is out of the question.

"We will take our time and make a week's journey of it," said the professor. "That will give us time to stop off at the various points of interest. We shall go through the towns of Rio Piedras, Guaynabo, Aguas Buenas, Cagues, Cayey, Aibonito, Coamo, Juan Diaz, and others, and we may as well take in all there is to see while we are at it."

"I'd rather get down to Ponce and put in some time there," grumbled Hockley. "I understand there is lots to see there." He was anxious to have a "good time" on the money he had received.

"We will have plenty of time at Ponce to see all there is worth looking up," answered Professor Strong.

The boys had begged to be allowed to make the journey on horseback, and the professor had consented, and obtained the necessary steeds from the best livery stable in San Juan. Darry wanted a lively animal but Amos Strong shook his head.

"You've had runaways enough," he said. "We want to make this journey without accident."

The day was a perfect one and they found the

first stage of the journey truly delightful. They passed through a rolling country and not far away were the mountains, with ridges sharply outlined against the sky. Some of the boys wanted to gallop ahead of the others but Amos Strong held them in check.

"We must keep together," he said. "I don't want any of you to get on the wrong road."

In a couple of hours they passed through the town of Rio Piedras, taking a look at the various public buildings and at a large sugar mill which was in the course of construction. It was midday and the place looked deserted.

"Shall we remain here or push on to the next place?" asked the professor.

"Let's push on," said Mark, and soon they were on the way to Guaynabo, where they stopped for dinner at a native house which was far from large and not over clean. Yet a good meal was prepared for them, and this they ate eagerly, for the ride had given them an appetite.

Nightfall found them in the vicinity of Aguas Buenas. They had stopped a dozen times on the road, to look at the plantations, and once to assist

a native whose ox cart had broken down. It had begun to cloud up and now a few drops of rain came down.

"We are in for a storm," said Frank. "I reckon we had best look for some sort of shelter."

"Why not push on to the next town?" questioned Sam.

"We can try it," answered Professor Strong. "But there is no use of our getting soaked."

Tropical storms are apt to come up in a hurry, and inside of a quarter of an hour it was raining in torrents. They had crossed the bridge of a small stream and now they found shelter under the shed of a long warehouse which was old and empty.

"This is certainly a downpour," remarked Professor Strong, when they were out of it. "See how the water is rushing along the roadway."

He was right, the rain was coming down as if there had been a cloudburst. There was a little lightning and thunder, but not enough to cause alarm. But the heavy fall of water made the very roof of the old warehouse sag.

"I never saw the water come down like this before," observed the professor, as the downfall con-

tinued. "It will certainly wash things out in the valley."

For over an hour the heavy fall of rain continued. It was coming through the roof of the warehouse and they had trouble in keeping even comparatively dry. But now the thunder was rolling up to the northward, and it slackened a trifle.

"Hark!" cried Sam, presently.

"What did you hear?" came from several of the others.

"Thought I heard somebody calling for help. Listen!"

They listened, and the cry was repeated. It came from down a side trail which joined the highway just in front of the old warehouse.

"Somebody is in trouble down there!" ejaculated Mark. "Let us go and investigate."

Without waiting to obtain permission from the professor, he started down the side trail, with the others following. The trail led downward into something of a bottom, full of loose rocks, with here and there a patch of mud.

"I see her!" cried Mark, presently, as he turned a corner of the trail and came in sight of a wide

and shallow stream, backed up by a rocky hill and a tangle of forest growth. "It's a woman on a hut, and she is in danger of drowning!"

Mark was right. In the middle of the wide stream was a native hut which had been washed away from somewhere and become lodged in between the rocks. On the frail building, which looked as if it might go to pieces at any instant, sat an old colored woman, shrieking for help at the top of her voice. The old woman had with her two children, a white girl and a white boy of perhaps five or six years of age, and to these she was clinging desperately.

"Save us! save us!" cried the colored woman, in Spanish.

"We'll do what we can," called back the professor. "Hold tight till we can get to you."

"How are you going to get to her?" demanded Hockley. "That water is running like mad."

"I think we can leap from rock to rock," suggested Sam.

"Let's take hold of hands," came from Frank.

"One of you run back for that rope which we saw at the warehouse," said the professor, and Hockley did so, for the lank youth had no desire to risk his life in that foaming and dashing torrent.



"Save us! save us!" cried the colored woman. - *Page 200.*

It was no easy matter to leap from one rock to the next, and Professor Strong and the boys advanced with caution. The rain still came down, keeping the footholds wet and blinding their eyesight. Once Mark slipped and went into the stream, but fortunately it was in a shallow where the water only reached to his knees.

At last the hut was gained and with trembling hands the old colored woman handed down first the girl and then the boy. By this time Hockley had returned with the rope, and this was passed out and a line was formed.

"See the children safe first, do not mind me," said the old colored woman, and this was done, and Mark took one while Sam took the other. Then Frank and Professor Strong brought in the old colored dame, who was so excited and exhausted that she could scarcely stand. Once on the bank of the stream the whole party made for the shelter of the warehouse.

It was a long while before the colored woman recovered sufficiently to speak. Then she said that she was a nurse, and that she worked for a certain Señor Alcamba, of Ponce. The two children were the señor's, his only beloved ones, since his wife had

died. The nurse had been traveling from one village to another with them, when the storm had overtaken her and she had resolved to remain for some hours at the home of a friend. But she had lost her way in the rain and sought shelter in the hut near the bank of the stream. Without warning the rain had washed the hut into the water and she had had a desperate struggle to save the boy and the girl from drowning. She had been almost ready to give up in despair when the good *Americanos* had appeared. She was very, very grateful and kissed their hands, while tears of gratitude streamed down her fat cheeks.

As it promised to keep on raining for at least several hours it was decided that they should move on to Aguas Buenas. The colored woman said she could ride a horse and she was given Sam's steed. She carried the little girl, while the professor took the boy. Sam hopped up behind Frank, and thus the entire party reached the town mentioned a little over an hour later. Accommodations were found at a hotel which had just been established by a Porto Rican and an American, and Professor Strong saw to it that the colored woman and her charges were looked after with care. The colored woman sent

out a messenger to look up some of her friends and by nightfall a man came with a carriage and made arrangements for taking her and the children away early in the morning.

“I shall not forget you,” said the woman to Professor Strong. “Señor Alcamba shall know of your bravery and kindness, and he will surely reward you.”

“We want no reward,” was the professor’s answer. “We are glad to know that we were able to assist you.”

CHAPTER XXI

ACROSS PORTO RICO ON HORSEBACK

By the time the boys were stirring the next morning the colored woman and the boy and girl were gone. The storm had cleared away and the sun was shining brightly. But out in the roadway and in the garden attached to the hotel the traces of the heavy downfall of rain were still in evidence.

"I see some beautiful flowers around here," said Mark, taking a walk with the professor before sitting down to breakfast. "But a great number are strange to me, and so are many of the vegetables and fruits they use."

"The vegetables mostly in use throughout the island are white and sweet potatoes, carrots, turnips, beets, radishes, cabbage, yams, yautias, cassava, or tapioca, and okra root," answered Professor Strong. "There are many kinds of beans and peas and also a great variety of squashes and pumpkins. Of fruits the banana is, of course, the leader, but Porto Rico pineapples are delicious and so are the

oranges and the cantelopes. Limes are much in use for lime water. Lemons are raised for export. There are also a vast number of shrubs and trees which furnish medical extracts, and numerous dye-woods are found here, including fustic, which gives a yellow dye, divi-divi, which gives a reddish-brown dye, mora, which gives bluing, and annatto, which grows in great profusion and furnishes the peculiar golden yellow often used in coloring butter and cheese."

"Gracious, I didn't know they used coloring here," cried Mark.

"They use some, but I am sorry to say the most of the butter coloring goes to the United States. There are also trees here which produce a variety of gums and resins, some of them very much in demand, and which, consequently, bring fancy prices."

"It's certainly a land of plenty," said Frank, who had come up while the professor was speaking. "The Porto Ricans ought to be happy."

"They will be as soon as they have gotten used to the new order of things, Frank. But I doubt if they will ever get used to what we call hustling. They are used to taking their own time about everything, and the climate is against the strenuous life."

The town of Aguas Buenas is perched high up on the side of a mountain, with a broad valley lying below,—where the flood had occurred. The place is of small importance and contains little but thatched huts, with here and there a building of prominence. There is an old church, and a hotel or two is springing up, ready to accommodate the American tourist when he comes, and he surely will come when this fine climate is better known.

By nine o'clock they were again on the way heading along the smooth road leading to Caguas, five miles away. As they went down into the valley the tropical vegetation became more luxurious than ever, the out-spreading branches of palms and other trees often brushing them as they passed.

"Not far away from here is a wonderful opening," said Professor Strong. "It is called Dark Cave, and is said to extend over a mile underground. I was never inside, but the interior is said to be very beautiful."

"Let us go and see it," cried Frank.

"No, we haven't time, and besides, it is said to be a very dangerous cave to visit, on account of the numerous pitfalls."

As they journeyed along the professor pointed out the Luquillo Mountains far to the eastward.

"That highest peak is Mount Yunque, the highest peak on the island," he said. "It has quite a history. Years and years ago Porto Rico was swept by hurricanes and earthquakes, and then the natives thought that Mount Yunque was angry and did all they could think of to appease the monster."

They did not stop at Caguas but pushed on directly for Cayey, fifteen miles to the south-westward. They now passed numerous villages, each but a collection of thatched huts, some standing directly on the ground and others, near the water, on little stilts. But few animals were visible outside of cows and sheep. Of poultry there was a large quantity, and at one spot they came upon a group of natives watching a cock fight directly in the middle of the road. The cocks had been fighting for some time, evidently, for both were horribly wounded.

"What a barbarous custom!" exclaimed Sam, with a shudder. "I hope that our government puts a stop to that sport."

"It will come in time, Samuel," said the professor. "But everything cannot be done at once. As it is, I am glad there are no more bull fights."

At the streams they passed they would often come upon native women washing clothes and numerous youngsters in bathing. Youngsters also filled the roadway at certain villages, running and shouting in their sport. The majority wore but little clothing, and in some cases they acted as if even this was a burden to them. A good many would run away on seeing the Americans and shout out in Spanish, "the shooters!" thinking of the soldiers that had fought on the island during the late war.

"This whole territory was in a state of suspense during the war," said Professor Strong. "The army was under General Miles and an advance was made from three different directions. The natives were secretly in sympathy with our soldiers, but Spain had many soldiers here and the natives were forced to obey them. The fighting was stopped in the midst of a battle, when a messenger appeared with news that an armistice had been agreed upon. Then, as you know, the war came to an end, and some time later, Porto Rico was ceded by Spain to the United States, along with the Philippines and other islands of lesser importance."

After a stop at Cayey over night they pushed

westward to Aibonito, a distance of ten miles further. A gentle breeze was blowing into the valley from the mountains, making the ride more delightful than ever, and they visited several plantations in that vicinity.

"This is the best of the weather to be met with in Porto Rico," observed the professor, as they moved along at a walk, to take in the scenery around them. "For a sick man nothing is better, unless, of course, he needs the bracing air of a high altitude. I think in years to come folks will come here for their health just as they now go to Jamaica and the Bermudas."

At Aibonito the accommodations were very poor, and late as it was they decided to push on to Coamo, on the river by that name. This was a distance of seven or eight miles, and Hockley growled at having to ride so much further. But nobody paid attention to him.

"He is getting to be a regular sore-head," whispered Frank to Mark. "If he keeps on I guess the professor will have to take him in hand."

"He hasn't gotten over that trick on shipboard," replied Mark. "And he has received money. That always puffs him up."

"Do you think the professor knows about the money?"

"I guess not. Glummy never shows his wad when the professor is around. But he loves to shove it under our noses," added Mark.

All were thoroughly tired when Coamo was reached and after supper were glad enough to retire. They slept soundly, although Darry afterward declared that he had been bitten almost to death by fleas.

"Yes, Porto Rico has its full share of those pests," said Professor Strong, when told of this. "I felt them myself. It is too bad, but there seems to be no help for it. The natives will have to fight them long and hard if they ever wish to get totally rid of the pests."

There was not much to see in Coamo outside of the church and one or two small public buildings, and some odd looking fishing smacks on the river, and shortly after breakfast they started on the last stage of their journey across the island. Their course was now westward, through Juan Diaz, where they stopped for another day, and towns of lesser importance. For the greater portion of the distance, the road here is not more than five miles

from the sea, and at certain high points they could catch glimpses of the rolling Caribbean, flashing brightly in the sunlight. They crossed half a dozen streams, and at last turned down the slope leading into the outskirts of Ponce, named after the well-known discoverer, Ponce de Leon.

"It's certainly been a delightful trip," was Sam's comment. "And we have seen a good deal of native life. Much more than a fellow could see by rushing past in a train—if there was a railroad."

Ponce is situated about three miles north of the harbor, in a wide plain surrounded by numerous gardens and plantations. The boys could see numerous churches and public buildings, and as they came closer saw several fine hotels which have been erected within the past two years.

"This is something like it," said Darry, as he smiled at the scene. "Is Ponce a very large place?"

"It has a population of about thirty thousand," answered the professor, "although newcomers are drifting in from the States by every steamer. It is a great shipping point for all islands south of this, and, as you know, the terminus of one of the three railroads of Porto Rico."

Half an hour saw them in the center of the city,

at the hotel the professor had selected, a hostelry very much like that they had stopped at in Havana. The street was filled with people coming and going, and venders were pushing their way this direction and that, each with a wide board balanced on his head, containing fruits, candies, or pastries. Around at the side door of the hotel were several mules, each carrying two trunks, strapped together and hung over the beast's sides. And over all a little native boy was running along with a bundle of newspapers under his arm shrieking at the top of his lungs: "*Americano* news! Who buy de papair? *Americano* newspapair!"

"Hurrah! At last we have struck the Porto Rican cousin of the Bowery newsboy!" cried Frank. "I declare, it makes a fellow feel quite at home. Let's buy some papers." And they did, paying what was equal to fifteen cents each for the sheets. They were New York papers and nearly a week old, but all were satisfied later on to sit down and read them thoroughly.

CHAPTER XXII

HOCKLEY IN TROUBLE

ON the following morning all the boys, with the exception of Hockley, were up bright and early. They wanted to see as much as possible of Ponce, for the professor assured them that the public buildings, the ancient churches, and the parks and public drives were all well worth visiting.

"I don't want to go out," said Hockley, when called. "The horseback riding made me stiff. I'd rather rest to-day," and so, while the others spent a day visiting a score of places, he was left behind to do as he pleased.

The money he had received from his indulgent father had been "burning a hole in his pocket," to use a common expression. He wanted a chance to have a good time, and as soon as Professor Strong and the others had departed he set out for that purpose.

"I'm going to do as I please after this," he told

himself. "And no Captain Sudlip shall get the best of me either."

Having finished his breakfast Hockley purchased a package of cigarettes and then went to the café for a "bracer." He thought it quite manly to drink a "bracer," although he was in no need of the liquor. To show off he paid for the drink out of a twenty dollar bill he possessed and at the same time took good care to show the roll of money he carried.

The foolish boy did not realize that Ponce was at this time filled with fortune hunters of all sorts, men who had drifted in from the States and from other places, all anxious to see if American rule of the island would not give them some chance of bettering their condition. Many of the fortune hunters were hard working and honest, but there was another sort, gamblers and those who lived by their wits. These were the fellows to be met with at the cafés and other drinking resorts.

Not far from where Hockley was standing stood a man of about forty, stout, and dressed in a checked suit of loud pattern. The man boasted of a profusion of heavy jewelry, and from his shirt bosom sparkled an immense "diamond"—of the sort

which can be purchased in any large city for ten or twenty-five cents. The man wore patent leather boots, and his general appearance showed him to be the sport that he was.

In an easy way he lounged up to Hockley. His eye had noted the youth's roll of bills and he made up his mind that here was a possible victim. He put his hand in his pocket and drew forth a large dead bug.

"Excuse me," he said, politely and reached for Hockley's collar. "It's a pinching bug, I guess," and he threw the bug on the floor and crushed it with his foot.

Of course Hockley thanked the stranger for his kindness and then, as the latter was not drinking, asked him to have something. The invitation was promptly accepted, and in return the stranger also treated.

"My name is Brown," he said. "J. Rutherford Brown, and I am from Montana. I take it you are a newcomer in Ponce."

"I am," answered Hockley, and told his name and mentioned the party of which he was a member. "It's rather slow, traveling around with those other fellows," he added. "I want to see some sport."

"Of course," rejoined J. Rutherford Brown, enthusiastically. "I like a little sport myself."

More talk followed, and in the end it was agreed that the pair should go on a little trip of their own, down the seashore, to a resort where, according to the man from Montana, a "bang up, good, all around time" could be had. "I'll show you some real life," said J. Rutherford Brown. "Nothing like it anywhere."

They were soon on the way, in a carriage the man from Montana insisted on engaging. The route lay out of Ponce proper and along a seaside drive to where some enterprising American hotel men had erected several buildings, devoted partly to keeping boarders but mostly to gambling.

The man from Montana had brought a flask of liquor with him, and he insisted on treating, so that by the time the resort he had in mind was reached poor Hockley was in anything but a clear state mentally. He felt strangely elated.

"This is all right," he repeated several times. "You're a good fellow, Brown, a fine fellow. Glad we met. You'll lose nothing on me, no, sir. I've got money, I have, and I mean to spend it."

"That's all right, but I insist on paying my own

way," answered J. Rutherford Brown, smoothly. "I've got money myself."

Once at the resort it was an easy matter for the sharper to get Hockley into a side room, where the pair were free from observation. In pulling a handkerchief from his pocket, the man from Montana let fall a pack of cards.

"Hullo, you play cards?" asked Hockley. "But of course you do. So do I. Let's have a game."

J. Rutherford Brown was willing, indeed, he was going to suggest a game himself, and having ordered more liquor, and also a fine dinner, they sat down. At first they played for fun. But then the man from Montana spoke of a game in which he had won five dollars, and poor, deluded Hockley at once insisted they put up something. Thus the betting started, at a dollar, and the youth was allowed to win twenty times that sum.

"Told you I could do it," said Hockley. "But you shall have a chance to win it back directly after dinner." And after the meal the game began again, and lasted the best part of two hours.

It is not my intention in these pages to describe the manner in which Hockley was fleeced out of his money, nearly a hundred and seventy-five dollars all

told. Let me say flatly that I do not approve of gambling in any form, and the person who gambles and loses his money deserves no sympathy. It is a poor way in which to waste valuable time, and money won at gambling rarely does the winner any good. It is generally a case of "easy come and easy go," and with the coming and going the player loses a self-respect which is hard to regain.

When the last game was played Hockley sat back in a dazed, blank way. He had lost it all—every dollar had passed into the hands of J. Rutherford Brown. And not only his money but also his watch and his ring, those precious gifts from his father and his mother. At first he could not realize it.

"Gone!" he muttered hoarsely, and there was almost a sob in his voice.

"Better luck next time," returned the man from Montana, cheerfully. And then he shoved a glass of liquor at the foolish youth, who clutched and drank it eagerly, in the hope of regaining his "nerve."

What happened immediately after that Hockley could scarcely tell with certainty. He remembered being helped into a carriage, and of taking a long drive, and then all became a blank.



When he came to his senses he sat up in a dazed fashion. He knew nothing but that his head ached as if it was going to split open and that his mouth felt parched to the last degree.

"Where am I?" he muttered and stared around him. On all sides were boxes and barrels, and he had been lying on some of these, with some old bagging for a pillow. Gradually it dawned upon him that this was a warehouse and that the rising sun was shining in at several of the long, slatted windows. A strong smell of tobacco pervaded the place.

"A tobacco warehouse," he murmured, slowly. "Now how did I come here and what makes my head ache so?" He tried to collect his thoughts. "I went out riding with that stranger and we had a big dinner together, and then we played cards——"

He stopped short and felt into his pockets. They were empty. Then he clutched his watch pocket and felt of his finger upon which the ring had rested. The full realization of what had occurred now burst upon him, and his breath grew short while heavy beads of perspiration stood out on his brow.

"Cleaned out!" he muttered. "Cleaned out, just as I was cleaned out by Dan Markel! Oh, what a

fool I've been!" And tears of rage filled his eyes, while he pounded his fist on the top of a barrel. Then he leaped up and shook the fist in the air.

"But he shan't get the best of me! I'll make him square up if I have to go to the police and tell everybody! He shan't get the best of me!"

His hat had rolled to the floor, and putting it on he hurried to the warehouse door, which was unlocked. Beyond was a dock extending to the waterfront and close at hand was a road leading to the city, four miles away. A cart was passing and he hailed the driver. By signs and a few words of broken Spanish he let the cart driver know he wanted to get to Ponce as soon as possible and the native made room for him on the rough seat.

The drive in the early morning air did Hockley good, and by the time the cart rattled along on the uneven pavements of the city the lank youth felt somewhat like himself. At a public fountain he left the native and got a drink. Possibly the native expected pay for his service, but if so he was disappointed, and he drove on looking as if such were his feeling.

Now that he felt a little better Hockley sat down

in one of the city parks to review the situation. It was all well enough to go after J. Rutherford Brown and have him arrested, but what would Professor Strong say to the whole proceedings?

"Hang the professor!" he exclaimed, and gave the park bench a savage kick with his foot. "I'm going to have satisfaction. I'm going to catch that fellow and make him give up my money and things if I die for it!"

Leaving the park he espied an American, and from this man received directions which speedily took him to the café where he had first met J. Rutherford Brown. Going inside, he asked for the man.

"Haven't seen him this morning," replied the keeper of the resort.

"Do you know where he lives?" went on Hockley. "It's a matter of importance to him," he went on, shrewdly.

"He has a room at the Snug Corner, I believe."

"Where is that?"

"Three squares up the street, on the corner."

Waiting to hear no more, Hockley strode out and

up the street in the direction indicated. It was now ten o'clock, and he had had no breakfast, but just then he had no thought of eating.

Walking into the corridor of the hotel he glanced around. Only a few people were present. Then he glanced into the smoking and reading room.

His heart gave a bound. J. Rutherford Brown was there, smoking contentedly. He had his feet cocked up on a table and was reading a newspaper.

Going up to the man from Montana, Hockley tore the newspaper from his grasp.

"You villain, you!" he cried, wrathfully. "You swindled me!"



“You villian, you!” he cried, wrathfully. “You swindled me.” — Page 222.

CHAPTER XXIII

THE BULLY IS HUMBLLED

MANY a man would have been startled by such a direct accusation, but J. Rutherford Brown had been in a similar position before and was not to be scared thus easily. He turned slowly, put his feet on the floor and gazed coldly at Hockley.

"Young man, you are mistaken," he said. "And if you dare to repeat your words you will be sorry."

"But I say—" went on the youth, and then the look in the eyes of the man made him pause. It was a merciless, crafty face that peered into his own and it made Hockley shiver in spite of himself.

"We had several fair and square games of cards," went on the man from Montana. "And you lost your money. Don't be a calf to cry over it. If you are in hard luck say so, and I'll—well, I'll lend you ten dollars."

As he concluded J. Rutherford Brown calmly took from his hip pocket a big roll of bills—a large

portion of them Hockley's bills—and drew forth one of the denomination mentioned.

"Do you want this?" he asked, extending the bill between the tips of his fingers.

"Ye—yes," stammered the youth, and took it. "But—but——"

"I don't want to talk over the affair of yesterday," interrupted the man. "If you will remember, I lost something before the luck turned. If you had quit the game then, I should not have squealed. Besides that, I took you away, so that you would not get into trouble while you slept. I spent ten dollars for carriage fare, but we will let that pass."

Having thus delivered himself, J. Rutherford Brown hoisted his feet to the table once more and resumed the reading of his newspaper. Hockley looked at him in amazement not unmixed with consternation. He had never before met such a fellow as this. He did not know how to proceed, and walked away revolving the situation in his mind.

The more he thought it over, the more Hockley became convinced that he could do little or nothing. Of course, if it came to the pinch, J. Rutherford Brown would deny everything, and as there were

no witnesses to what had occurred, legal proof would be hard to obtain.

"I've been a chump," he muttered as he walked out of the hotel. "A downright chump."

As there seemed nothing else to do, he turned his footsteps in the direction of the hotel at which the professor and the other boys were stopping. His heart felt like lead in his bosom and he could not for the life of him conjure up what to say. He knew that excuses would be unavailing, that Professor Strong would insist upon making a rigid investigation.

As he turned a corner leading to the hotel he came face to face with Professor Strong, who was walking with another man, a native hired to show the party the sights.

"Jacob Hockley," cried the professor. "Where have you been? We have been hunting everywhere for you."

"It's a long story, sir," answered Hockley, meekly. "And if you please, I'd like to get breakfast before I tell it."

"So you have had nothing to eat? Then come to the hotel by all means. But where have you been?"

"Out of town, a good many miles, I guess."

"Out of town?"

"Yes, sir. And I've lost the most of my money," went on the lank youth, desperately.

"How did you lose that?" And now Professor Strong's face grew stern.

Hockley felt a certain quaking within him. It would never do to say that he had been playing cards—worse, that he had been gambling. Professor Strong had read the young travelers more than one lecture on evils of this sort.

"I—I got in a crowd and somehow I either lost the money or it was taken from me," stammered the bully. "But please don't tell the others," he went on. "They'll only have the laugh on me."

"Just give me the details," said Professor Strong, briefly, and then Hockley had to invent a long tale of how he had gone carriage riding down to the seashore and how, while he was getting a lunch at a restaurant, there had been a horse runaway and he had gone out to see the excitement.

"There was more of a crowd than I thought," he continued. "I was shoved around by a policeman and a number of natives. I had been counting my money and when the excitement began I rammed it

in my hip pocket. When I went back to the eating place the money was gone."

"And what made you remain away all night?"

"It was growing dark when the runaway happened and I thought I could find the money this morning. But I didn't find anything."

"Humph! How about your watch and that ring you are in the habit of wearing?"

Hockley felt a certain cold chill steal over him. In his haste to smooth matters over he had forgotten about the watch and the ring.

"They—er—they got lost too," he said, lamely, his face growing very red.

"Quite likely," was Professor Strong's comment. "Come with me. We will get to the bottom of this later on—after you have had something to eat."

Hockley was hungry, but eating breakfast came very hard to him that morning. As soon as he had finished Professor Strong plied him with questions, and at last he broke down and confessed all—how he had received the money order from home and how he had started out to have a little quiet fun, as he called it. And then, when the professor insisted that he take him to the spot where the runaway had occurred, he had to admit that there had

been no runaway but that he had fallen into the hands of a sharper, and that the sharper now had all the money excepting ten dollars and the amount spent for the dinner.

"I am sure he drugged me," said Hockley, weakly. "He wouldn't have gotten the money from me if he hadn't."

"I will see the man," returned Professor Strong, shortly, and insisted that the youth show the way to where J. Rutherford Brown might be found.

The man from Montana stood upon the hotel steps, just preparatory to going on a hunt for another victim. He was smoking a black-looking cigar. He felt particularly elated, for between Hockley and a victim picked up two days before he had come into the possession of over three hundred dollars. To be sure, this was no fortune, especially to one supposed to own valuable gold mines in the West, but to J. Rutherford Brown, who had often had less than a dollar in his pockets, it was a considerable sum.

"Don't think I'll stay here much longer," he mused, as he puffed away. "That boy or that man from Philadelphia may turn up and make trouble. Guess I'll go back to San Juan."

"There is the fellow!" cried Hockley, to Professor Strong. "The man with the checked suit, who is smoking."

The professor took a good look and then he smiled grimly to himself. "I fancy we are in luck," he said, briefly. "I know this fellow."

"You do?" ejaculated Hockley. "Who is he?"

Professor Strong did not answer, but going up to the man from Montana clapped him on the arm.

"So we meet again, Henry Umbler," he said.

The man who had called himself J. Rutherford Brown gave a start and his face changed color. Then he recovered and endeavored to put on a bold front.

"You are mistaken, sir. My name is not Umbler," he said.

"We won't argue the point, Umbler. I want you to pay back to this young man the money you took from him."

"Don't know him, sir. You are making a mistake."

"Are you sure of this fellow?" questioned Professor Strong of Hockley.

"Yes, sir," was the prompt answer.

"Then, Umbler, you must give up the money,

every cent of it. Please to remember that you are in United States territory now—not in Brazil, where you were when last we met. I fancy some stockholders of the International Star Rubber Company would be glad to get their hands on Henry Umbler, one of the promoters of that get-rich-quick concern.”

“I tell you I am not Henry Umbler,” insisted the man from Montana.

“Very well then. We’ll go to police headquarters and settle this affair.”

“What do you want?”

“I want this young man’s money, his watch and his ring returned to him.”

“What is he to you?”

“I brought him down here to see the sights,—and I am bound to see that he is not swindled. Give him back his money and other things and I will not prosecute you, but if you refuse, I’ll see to it that he not only gets his money but that you go back to the West, where you belong.”

At this plain talk the face of the swindler became a study. At last he turned and faced Hockley.

“We had a fair game,” he growled. “You’re a baby to squeal, nothing but a baby. But if you want the money you can have it.”

He brought a roll of bills out of his pocket, and began to count out a sum equal to that the youth had possessed. With this, and the watch and ring, in his hand he looked again at Professor Strong.

"If I give him this does that close the whole affair?" he asked.

"Yes, so far as I am concerned," answered Amos Strong.

"Then here you are, baby," went on the man from Montana, and thrust the money and other things into Hockley's willing hand. "Don't ever try to be a sport again. You're only fit to be let loose in a kindergarten." And then he walked away, puffing at his black cigar more furiously than ever.

"Who is he?" questioned Hockley, as he put the money away, after counting it.

"He is a Western sharp," replied the professor. "Years ago he was mixed up in a stock company that proved to be little better than a swindle. I had some shares in it but managed to get my money back. I tried to help others in the company, but they wouldn't listen to my plan and went ahead on their own account and lost. I met Umbler in Brazil once and tried to get more money out of him, for the other stockholders, but he laughed at me, for

at that time it would have been a hard matter to have a man transported from Brazil to the United States on such a charge as I could make."

"I—I am much obliged for getting the money back, sir."

"It was rare good luck, Jacob, nothing else, and now you have it again I want you to turn it over to me."

"But, sir——."

"I will not argue the matter." Professor Strong's voice grew stern once more. "You can either give the money to me, or pack your trunk and go home. And if you get into any more such scrapes I shall notify your father and send you home anyway. I want no more gambling and no more 'seeing the sights' on your own account. You have got to turn over a new leaf."

For half an hour Amos Strong "laid down the law" to Hockley and at the end of that time the bully felt very humble indeed. He did not wish to be sent home, and he promised faithfully to do better in the future; and there the affair was dropped.

CHAPTER XXIV

SOMETHING ABOUT EARTHQUAKES AND VOLCANOES

FOR four days the boys traveled around Ponce with the professor, taking in all the sights. They also took a trip on the railroad to Guayanilla and Yauco, and likewise down to several small villages along the seacoast. They were particularly interested in the American government of the island, and spent several hours at the various departments. Here the professor met two officials whom he knew, and all were made to feel thoroughly at home.

In those trips Hockley had little to say, and the other boys noticed the change in his manner.

"Something went wrong, that's certain," observed Darry. But what it had been they could not imagine, for neither Hockley nor the professor said anything, and they did not dare to make inquiries.

At the close of the fourth day a French steamer came into the Port of Ponce, bound from Hayti to

St. Pierre, Martinique. The steamer was one upon which Amos Strong had sailed once before and he knew Captain Danvier fairly well. He at once communicated this fact to the boys.

"If we are to go down to Martinique we cannot do better than sail with Captain Danvier," he said. "His steamer, the *Vendee*, is a comfortable craft, and we shall be certain of good food and pleasant company."

"Then let us sail by all means," said Mark, who was anxious to get to St. Pierre and see his father, and Frank said the same. Sam and Darry were likewise willing, and so, for a wonder was Hockley. As a matter of fact the tall youth had wished to get away from Ponce long before, being fearful that the other boys might learn something about J. Rutherford Brown, *alias* Henry Umbler, and of the loss of money by gambling.

The matter of accommodations on board of the *Vendee* was easily arranged with Captain Danvier, who was delighted to meet Professor Strong again, and twenty-four hours later the party bid farewell to the Port of Ponce and sailed for the island which was destined so soon to become the center of one of the largest catastrophes known to history.

"I guess we have quite a sail before us," said Sam, after land had become hidden in the distance.

"We have, Samuel," answered the professor. "Roughly speaking, the distance from Ponce to St. Pierre is a little over four hundred miles. We shall sail directly to the south-east, and make no stops on the way. The *Vendee* is not a fast steamer, but Captain Danvier calculates to cover the distance in five days."

"I have been looking up a map of the Leeward Islands," put in Mark. "What a lot of them there are and all in a row, like the tops of a mountain range."

"And that is just what they are, Mark, and the tops of a very high range of mountains at that, only the water covers the larger part of the range. Between some of these islands and to the east and west the water is five and six thousand feet deep. If the sea was swept away some of these peaks would be two miles high."

"They must have had some terrible earthquakes and volcanic eruptions to produce such mountains," said Darry, who had joined the group.

"They have had, Dartworth, and these eruptions

have extended not alone through the Leeward Islands, but through the whole of the West Indies and also through Central and South America and parts of Mexico."

"Do you know, I have never read much about earthquakes and volcanoes," observed Mark. "But it seems to me it ought to prove interesting reading."

"It is interesting—more so than any novel you ever read. Earthquakes alone have enlisted the attention of scientists for years, and they have to-day the record of over seven thousand which proved more or less disastrous."

"Seven thousand!" cried Darry. "Then old Mother Earth isn't as fixed as I thought her!"

"No, Mother Earth is not fixed, but continually changing, both inside and out. There are tremendous fires on the interior and these often crack open the dirt and rock, letting in large quantities of seawater. Then comes an explosion, just as you may have at home if you throw cold water into a red-hot kitchen range. The steam and gases don't know where to go, and consequently there is a volcanic eruption, or else something breaks loose underground and an earthquake follows. If this happens

close to the sea, or under the sea, there is a tidal wave, the water going down and up with the movements of the ocean bed."

"Do all earthquakes come from volcanic fires?" asked Sam.

"We cannot answer that, Samuel. Some earthquakes seem not to have any connection with volcanoes, as for instance the earthquake at Charleston, South Carolina, in 1886. There was no fire there, and but little gas, and what caused the quaking, with its tremendous damage to property and human life, is a mystery."

"What was the very worst earthquake known?" came from Frank.

"That at Lisbon, Portugal, in 1755. It happened late in the year, and before it occurred there were numerous small earthquakes and volcanic outbursts throughout Europe. When the big earthquake came there were three shocks in quick succession and the very bottom of the harbor dropped out. After many ships were engulfed, the bottom of the harbor came up again and there was a fierce onrush of water. What was left standing of the city took fire, and fully fifty thousand people lost their lives."

"Isn't Vesuvius the largest of all known volcanoes?" asked Darry.

"It is certainly the most destructive of volcanoes, having destroyed Pompeii by covering it with a fine dust, until it was completely buried from sight, and having covered Herculaneum with a shower of mud, so that hardly a soul escaped from a territory miles in extent. But the largest volcano in the world is probably Krakatua, situated between the islands of Sumatra and Java, in the East Indies. This volcano was first heard of in 1860, but its greatest outbreak occurred in 1883. At first there was a tremendous column of vapor over the island, which, fortunately, was uninhabited. This increased, and explosion after explosion was heard, each growing louder than the others. These explosions finally got so terrific that they were heard thousands of miles away, and the inhabitants of Java, Sumatra, and other islands in that vicinity were filled with terror. At last, late in August, came one grand explosion in the morning, and about eight square miles of dirt and rock were hurled into the air, to fall into the hissing and boiling sea. The gas, dust, and noxious vapors traveled for miles and obscured the sun like

an eclipse, and the tidal waves rose to a height of sixty to ninety feet, causing the loss of much shipping and probably forty thousand lives. Had Krakatua been on the mainland instead of on an island there would probably have been such a catastrophe as is unknown to modern history."

"I'm glad I wasn't there," put in Hockley, who had lounged up during the talk, and felt that he must say something. "I'm willing enough to stay where there are no earthquakes and volcanoes."

"What about the volcanoes down here?" asked Mark. "You said something about Mont Pelee, on the island of Martinique."

"That is now supposed to be an extinct volcano. It was in eruption in 1813, 1817, 1823, 1839 and 1851. The eruption of 1839 was the worst and this nearly destroyed Fort de France, the capital of the island. The volcano is forty-two hundred feet in height and several miles in circumference. The last time I stopped at St. Pierre there was an excursion formed to visit the crater of the mountain, which now forms a beautiful lake of unknown depth. We spent a day in looking around and took dinner at a fine hotel at the foot of Pelee."

"Are there any other volcanoes on the island?"

"There is Mount Carbet, near the center of the island, and Mount Vauclin near the south-east extremity, but they are of small importance."

"We must visit all the volcanoes!" cried Frank. "I want to see what they look like on the inside."

"I thought there was a big volcano on the Hawaiian Islands," put in Hockley.

"There is, Jacob, Kilauea, which is nine miles in circumference, and one of the largest in the world. But this has never shown the activity of Vesuvius or of some others. There is also a volcano on the island of St. Vincent, due south of Martinique, which is well worth visiting."

"Oh, I don't care to see them—at least, not if there is any danger of their shooting off," added the tall youth, hastily, and in such a manner that the others could scarcely keep from laughing.

"We will try to avoid all eruptions," replied the professor, smiling, for even he did not dream of what was so close at hand.

The boys found Captain Danvier just as sociable as Amos Strong had pictured him, and the worthy commander of the *Vendee* gave them permission to roam over the steamer at will. He could speak

English fairly well and took a delight in explaining his nautical instruments and other things to them.

"'Tis verra nice for you to do ze traveling around," he said. "And wid such a learned gentlemen as ze professair it is von double pleasure. He is ze fine gentlemen, I know heem well."

"And so do we know him," answered Darry. "He's O. K."

"O. K. Vot you means by zat?"

"Oh, I mean he is just the cheese," said Darry, bound to have his fun.

The French captain looked more bewildered than ever. "De cheese? Ha, you mean de cheese to eat—de *caise*. But you no mean to eat him, no."

"No, I mean he is just the ticket."

"De ticket, vot is dat? De *carte*, eh?. How is de professair de *carte*?"

"I didn't say the professor was a card—or a bill of fare either. I mean he is just all right."

"All right? Ha, I see—*oui, oui!* Surely he is all right, de professair is nevair wrong. But while he is right how can he be de ticket and de cheese, and de O. K.? Dat Englis as she is spoke by de American is von verra funny language, yes!" And the French captain shrugged his shoulders, while

Darry and the other boys had to turn away to keep from laughing in the good-hearted man's face. But when Darry and Mark tried to air the little French they knew before Captain Danvier he laughed as heartily as they did.

CHAPTER XXV

A COLLISION AT SEA

ON the second day on shipboard Professor Strong produced a map of the Leeward Islands, and told the boys something more concerning the island they were to visit.

"As you will see by the map," he said, "Martinique is irregular in shape. Roughly speaking it is forty miles long by from ten to fifteen miles wide. The area is less than four hundred square miles, and a good portion of this is rocky and unfit for cultivation."

"I see Mont Pelee, in the north," said Mark, studying the map.

"The principal cities are Fort de France, the capital, located on the bay of the same name, and St. Pierre and Lamentin. These three cities are, as you see, located on the western coast of the island. On the eastern coast is François, a town which has quite a respectable shipping. The total population of the island is about two hundred thousand, mostly negroes, half-castes, and French."

"What do they raise there?" came from Sam.

"Sugar mostly, although there is also some tobacco and also a few cattle. On an island so narrow, the streams, of course, cannot be of much importance. The place was discovered by Columbus in 1502 and was first settled by the French, and it is a French colony to-day. I have been at both Fort de France and St. Pierre and found them progressive in their way. Each contains from twenty-five to thirty thousand inhabitants and boasts of a number of fine parks and public buildings. Just outside of St. Pierre is a suburb in which the wealthy French population have some beautiful residences. The drive to this district is delightful."

"And how far is Mont Pelee from the city?" asked Sam.

"The volcano is five miles north of St. Pierre. The country is very hilly, but there are several routes by which the crater of the volcano can be reached with ease. There are a few small rivers to cross but these are all bridged. Just north of St. Pierre is a large sugar refinery. The city itself lies right along the water front, with high hills directly behind it."

After this the talk became general and the pro-

fessor told them of his former visits to Martinique, and also to the islands of Guadeloupe, Dominica, St. Lucia, St. Vincent and Grenada, others of the group. He told them there might be little or no hunting in store for them, but a good deal of mountain climbing, and volcano exploring if they desired it. And they said they did, all but Hockley, who, as usual hung back for something else, he could not tell what.

For two days the weather remained fine and the time passed swiftly enough, but on the morning of the third day the sky clouded up and by noon it was raining in torrents. Then the wind came up and the little steamer had all she could do to keep to her course.

The first effect of the storm was to drive everybody to the cabin. Windows and doors were bolted and ports secured, and the passengers kept their feet with difficulty as they moved around. Eating at the table was almost impossible, and the professor had a dish of peas upset in his lap, while Hockley nearly choked himself with a cup of coffee which went up his nose and into his eyes. Mark was also unfortunate. He was trying to eat a bit of steak but it slipped from his plate to his knee and then the whole

length of the dining room floor. A waiter stepped on it and went headlong, bringing down an armful of dishes with a mighty crash.

"Say! but this is a storm and no mistake!" gasped Mark, after the laughing had subsided. "And such a nice piece of beefsteak, too."

"We're lucky if we don't all go to the bottom!" sighed Hockley. And then he made a rush from the room to his stateroom. He had been taken seasick and was perfectly miserable from that time until the storm cleared away.

Toward evening the rain let up a bit, and as it was very close and stuffy in the cabin, the boys begged Professor Strong to let them go on deck. He finally consented, but warned them to take good care and not fall overboard.

"This is a treacherous sea," he said. "The waves sometimes run very high when least expected. Hold on tight, no matter where you happen to be standing."

"All right, we'll be careful," said Sam.

They went on deck and secured a position close by the wheelhouse, where a number of life-lines had been stretched. Captain Danvier was present and also warned them to be on guard.

“Ze waves run verra high,” he said. “You must hold on hard, *oui*, verra hard.”

An hour went by, and the storm seemed on the point of subsiding altogether. Feeling they could now walk around a little, the boys moved from one end of the steamer to the other with caution. The deck was still slippery and it was now dark.

Important events sometimes happen with alarming swiftness and such proved to be the case in the present instance. It had looked as if the storm was about at an end, but without warning there came another blow, which sent the spray flying in all directions. The lookouts were drenched and for the moment could see nothing. Then as the spray cleared away for an instant, one of them gave a mad yell in French:

“A ship! A ship dead ahead!”

The cry had hardly pierced the air when there came a tremendous shock which shook the *Vendee* from stem to stern and caused the steamer to list well over to port. Sam and Darry, who had started back for the cabin, to change their wet jackets, were pitched headlong and bumped into each other close to a post.

“Oh!” groaned Sam.

"Are you hurt, Beans?" questioned Darry, catching his chum by the shoulder.

"A little. What was that struck us?"

"I don't know."

Another cry now came out of the darkness. But it was in French and they could not understand it. Then some sailors rushed past them with a large square of canvas and some ropes.

"We have been struck and they are going to cover the hole with sail cloth," explained another passenger, who could speak both French and English. "What we struck nobody knows excepting that it was some kind of vessel."

With difficulty the two boys gained their feet and ran for the cabin. At the doorway both halted and each gazed at the other in consternation.

"Mark and Frank!" burst out Darry. "Where are they?"

"I'm sure I don't know," responded Sam, in equal dismay. He raised his voice: "Frank! Mark! Are you safe?" he called out.

No answer came back, and now Professor Strong rushed up, fully as alarmed as anybody.

"Are you all right?" he questioned. "Where are Mark and Frank?"

"We don't know, sir," answered Sam.

"They were on deck with you?"

"Yes, sir."

"Pray heaven they haven't gone overboard," gasped Amos Strong, and greatly agitated, he ran out into the darkness of the deck. Then they heard him call back: "Remain in the cabin until I return."

A dozen cries now resounded on every side, and bells were jangling almost as wildly. The *Vendee* had been struck on the starboard side, just aft of the bow, and the captain was ordering some of the cargo to be shifted to the stern, that the bow might come up as far as possible out of the water. In the meantime the ship's carpenter had got out the sailcloth and he and his men were lowering it over the hole, to keep out the rush of water. Below, the pump had been connected with the engine and this was already battling bravely to free the hold of the briny element that threatened to send the gallant steamer to the bottom.

In the midst of the excitement Hockley appeared. He saw that this was no "fake" sinking, and his face was pale with terror as he clung first to Sam and then to Darry.

"It's awful!" he wailed. "What shall we do?"

Where are the life preservers? Where is the professor? Why don't he order out a boat to save us? How far do you suppose we are from land? Oh, I know I can't swim in such a sea!" And he shook like a leaf.

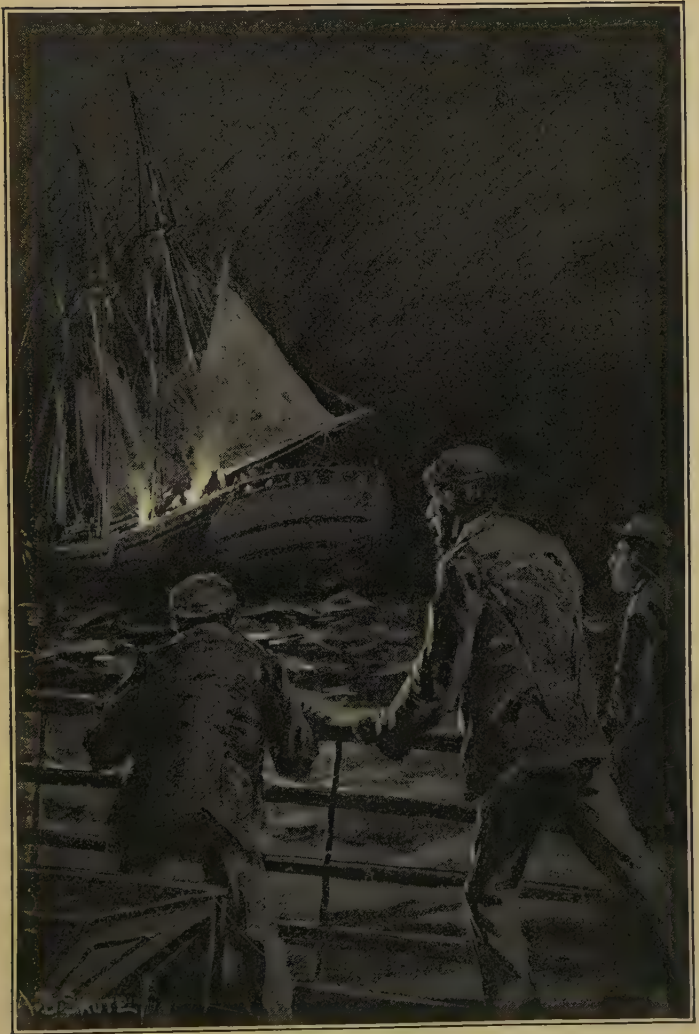
"We are not going down yet, Jake," answered Sam. "The professor is looking for Mark and Frank. I'm afraid they've been washed overboard."

"There is a signal of distress!" interrupted Darry, pointing out through the darkness. A rocket had flared through the air, and now another followed. Then a strong Bengal light lit up the scene.

"I'm going out to look for Frank and Mark," said Darry, recklessly, and left the cabin. Sam came close behind him. Hockley did not wish to go, but to remain alone seemed even worse and he also followed, but more slowly.

The *Vendee* had been backed and was now coming up alongside of the ship with which it had been in collision. The strong Bengal light showed her to be a three masted schooner, piled high with lumber. A good part of the lumber on the forward deck had been unshipped by the collision and was floating in the angry sea.

"Do you see anything of Mark and Frank?"



“Do you see anything of Mark and Frank?”
asked Sam, hoarsely. — *Page 250.*

asked Sam, hoarsely, as he and Darry slipped up beside the professor.

"Not a sign," was the sad answer. "If they were washed overboard I fear they were drowned."

"Oh, don't say that!" gasped Darry. "Drowned! It's horrible!"

"Can't they put out a small boat?" asked Sam.

"No small boat would live in such a sea as this, and besides with so much loose lumber floating around it would be doubly dangerous to try going out."

"But what are we going to do?" demanded Hockley. "I—I don't want to drown just yet."

"I don't imagine this steamer is going down, Jacob. We received a heavy blow, it is true, but she is built in a number of compartments. My whole anxiety, is for Mark and Frank. If they went overboard they must be lost."

"Well, it was their business to take care of themselves," grumbled the tall youth, unfeelingly.

"And it is your business to look out for yourself," retorted Darry. "But don't let us quarrel; this thing is far too serious," he added.

The Bengal light had now burnt itself out and no more were lit for the reason that the storm was

again coming up and the crew of each vessel had to bestow their entire attention to the question of saving the craft from going down. This was comparatively an easy matter on board of the *Vendee* and soon under officers were sent around to assure the passengers that there was no immediate cause for alarm, that the hole had been patched up temporarily, and that it would be thoroughly repaired as soon as the wind abated.

Captain Danvier was extremely sorry to hear that two of the boys were missing and at once did what he could toward finding them. But in such a storm, which was again increasing, his first duty was to his ship, and he said, as had Professor Strong, that to risk a small boat in such a sea would be foolhardy.

"We must wait until daylight," he said, in French. "I can do nothing now."

Slowly the night wore away. Nobody slept, and at the first streak of dawn all went on deck. The storm had passed, but the sky was still dark. The captain had thought best to lay to, thinking the lumber schooner might need assistance. The other craft was not far away and soon they came within hailing distance of each other. The lumber boat

flew the Dutch flag and proved to be bound from Saba to Curaçao.

"I have lost a large quantity of lumber!" roared the Dutch skipper, wrathfully. "I shall hold you responsible in law for it!"

"Have you seen anything of two boys?" questioned Captain Danvier. "We have lost them."

"No, I have seen no boys. Have you seen a man? We lost one of our sailors in that smash."

"No, we have seen nobody," answered the French captain.

"It was your fault we had that smash," the Dutch skipper continued. "Remember, I shall hold you for it in law, the first chance I get!"

"Do as you please about that," returned Captain Danvier, coolly. "You are as much to blame as myself. But if you see anything of those boys treat them well and you'll lose nothing by it."

"I'll treat them well enough," growled the Dutch skipper.

As the Dutchman could speak neither French nor English the conversation had to be carried on in his native tongue and it was hard for Captain Danvier to make himself understood. Only a few words more passed, and then the two vessels sep-

arated, and the lumber schooner proceeded on her way, with every sail set.

"It ees certainly verra sad," said the French captain, to the professor and the boys. "I vill do what I can for ze boys—but what is zare to do, tell me zat?"

"I wish you would remain in this vicinity for a day or so," answered Professor Strong. "They may be floating around, and if so I hope to pick them up."

The captain agreed readily, and not one day but two were spent in the vicinity. In the meantime the hole in the bow was repaired, so that danger from that source became a thing of the past.

The loss of Mark and Frank made Sam, Darry and Professor Strong feel much downcast and even Hockley went around looking very sober.

"I never dreamed that such a dreadful thing would happen," said Darry, and there were tears in his eyes. "I declare, if they don't turn up I'm going right back home."

"And I am with you," answered Sam. "To go sight-seeing without them would make me sick."

"And think of their fathers being at St. Pierre

ready to welcome them," went on Darry. "That makes it ten times worse."

And Sam agreed that it did. The loss of their chums cast a gloom over them impossible to dispel.

CHAPTER XXVI

THE LUMBER RAFT

LET us go back and find out what really did become of Mark and Frank at the time the *Vendee* was struck in the darkness of the storm by the Dutch lumber vessel.

As the French steamer listed to port the chums caught at the railing before them. But this was wet and slippery and in an instant Frank found himself over the side.

"Help!" he screamed, but the cry was drowned out in the roar of the elements around him. Mark made a clutch at him, but he, too, was carried overboard.

With clasped hands the two boys struck the water and went down and down, they knew not whither. The accident had occurred so quickly that both were completely bewildered, and it was purely by instinct that each closed his mouth to keep out the briny element. The waves leaped and foamed all around them, and Mark felt something scrape his shoulder,

he could not tell what, although long after he concluded it must have been the side of the steamer.

Just what occurred during the five minutes that followed it would be hard to describe. The boys clung to each other, bound to live or die together. Even in that awful moment the thought of separating was still more terrifying. Occasionally they saw a light, but soon these were lost to view, and they found themselves in the blackness of the night, alone.

"Frank, are you—you alive?" Such were the first words spoken between the pair.

"Ye—yes," came with a gasp. "Ho—how are we going to get back to the—the steamer?"

"I don't know. I can't see the vessel anywhere, can you?"

As the waves carried them upward they gazed around eagerly. Not a light was anywhere.

"The steamer has gone on—we are deserted!" cried Mark, and his heart sank like a lump of lead in his bosom.

"Oh, don't say that," returned Frank. "Surely, they won't leave us to drown!"

A period of silence ensued. Then Frank felt something sheer up alongside of him. He put out

a hand and felt a stick of wood—one washed overboard from the lumber craft.

“A log!” he cried. “Catch hold, Mark!”

Mark was willing enough and they caught hold of the log, to find that it was fastened with a short chain to a number of other logs. Not without difficulty they crawled to the top of the crude raft.

“Where did this come from?” queried Frank. “Do you suppose they threw it overboard for us?”

“Perhaps, although I never saw such a life raft on the *Vendee*—if it is a life raft. It looks more to me like some washed-away lumber. Perhaps we struck another ship—in fact, I am almost sure we did. If she was a lumber craft, this must be from her.”

Another spell of silence ensued, during which both strained their eyes to see through the driving storm. Nothing but the waves met their gaze, carrying them upward at one moment as if to the top of a high hill, and then letting them sink and sink into a hollow until it looked as if they should never rise again.

It was a time never to be forgotten, and each boy breathed a silent prayer that he might be brought

through this great peril in safety. Thus the minutes slipped by, until suddenly Mark gave a cry.

“A light! A sky-rocket!”

He was right, from a great distance they saw the rocket from the lumber vessel flare out through the storm. Then followed a brightness lower down, but this Bengal light was not so distinct.

“Can it be the steamer in distress?” they asked each other.

“Looks as if something was on fire,” said Mark. He tried to stand up on the lumber, Frank in the meantime holding him fast by the ankles. But now the raft went into a hollow, and when it came up again the light was gone.

Slowly the hours went by and the storm gradually subsided. The boys found that the chain was fastened tightly around the lumber and they clung to this and waited for daybreak. They did not mind being wet to the skin, for the night was warm, but each was thoroughly exhausted by his struggles.

At last came the light, low down in the east, and gradually the day came over the rim of the sea—dull and heavy and bringing little of cheer. Both stood up and gazed around eagerly.

Not a sail of any kind in sight.

It was a trying moment, and both had hard work to command their feelings. Here they were, cast away on the broad bosom of the Caribbean Sea, miles from land, and with no ship to pick them up.

"And nothing to eat or to drink," said Frank. "Oh, Mark, what shall we do?"

"I'm sure I don't know, Frank. All we can do is to remain on this pile of lumber and trust to luck."

"We'll die of hunger and thirst. I'm thirsty already."

"So am I, but we had better not think of that."

As the day grew a little brighter they continued to watch for the ship. Once Mark thought he saw a vessel far to the eastward, but he was not sure. An hour after this Frank gave a cry.

"Another raft, and somebody is on it!"

Frank was right, close at hand another raft was floating, and on top of this lay the figure of a man, either dead or asleep.

"Hullo there!" cried Mark. "Hullo! Ahoy!"

At first the figure on the raft did not stir, but as the lumber came closer the man sat up and gazed around wildly.

On catching sight of the two boys he gave a faint cry in a language that was strange to them.

"He must be a castaway like ourselves," said Mark.

"See, he is motioning to us with a rope," said Frank. "He is going to throw us one end."

The end of the rope was thrown not once, but three times before they could catch it. Then they drew the other raft toward them and lashed the two heaps of lumber together. Thus united, the piles made a raft of considerable size.

The man who had thus strangely joined them was evidently a sailor and he was suffering from an ugly wound on the shoulder. At first he said but little, but at last they made out that his name was Sven Orlaff and that he was a Norwegian.

"I be on da Dutch boat, *Christiana*," he said, in broken English. "Da boat strike da steamer an' I got by da vater in. So you go, too?"

"Yes, we were on the steamer," answered Mark. "Have you any idea where the steamer or the Dutch boat is?"

At this question Sven Orlaff shook his head. "Lose da boat—so dark," he said. "My shouler

much hurt—I sick, fall da vater in and must swim to da lumber. No see da boat vonce more.”

“We’re in a tough situation,” put in Frank, and heaved a sigh. “Are we anywhere near to land?”

At this Sven Orlaff shook his head again. “No land near dis blace,” he said. “No much boats here.”

“No land and very few ships,” said Mark. “Frank, it is certainly a dismal outlook.”

They saw that the Norwegian’s shoulder needed to be bound up and went at the work without delay, tearing the sleeves from their shirts for this purpose. He was thankful, and told them so in his own peculiar way.

The work had scarcely been accomplished when something odd happened. Frank had allowed an end of the rope to trail behind the raft. Now the rope was seized by some kind of a fish who swallowed the knot. Like a flash the Norwegian sailor pulled in the rope, landed the fish and smashed its head with his heel.

“Make to eat,” he explained. “I hungry.”

“Why, of course,” cried Mark. “I’m hungry myself. I wonder if we can’t catch more of them?”

For answer the sailor pulled a stout fishline from

his pocket, and also a knife. With the knife he cut off a portion of the fish's tail for bait.

"Give it to me, I'll do the fishing," said Mark, for he did not want the hurt man to use his wounded shoulder.

Luckily for them, fish were plentiful in that vicinity, and in a moment he got a bite and landed another fish, weighing at least two pounds. Then he tried again and again, and soon had a mess of a dozen.

"We shall not starve to death, that's sure," said Frank, who had fixed a place between the lumber for the catch. "I wish, Mark, you could catch something else."

"What's that?"

"Water."

"Don't mention it. I am dry enough without thinking about it."

All were dry, and as the day wore on their thirst increased until they could hardly endure it.

There was small danger of the lumber blazing up, with so much salt water to extinguish a big fire, and so they cut slivers from some boards and started a little fire on the top of several big timbers, using a match from Mark's water-tight safe for that pur-

pose. Soon they had a fairly good blaze going and over this they cooked their fish, or rather, half cooked and half burnt it, for the operation proved far from satisfactory. But even such a meal was better than if the fish had been raw.

By the time they had eaten their fill it began to cloud up once more and soon it was raining steadily. They lost no time in spreading their garments to catch the water and soon each had as much as he wished to drink. The rain lasted about two hours, then cleared away quickly, and toward the middle of the afternoon the sun came out.

As the light kept growing Mark stood up and looked around them once more. Then he gave a cry:

“A ship! A ship!”

CHAPTER XXVII

STONE DUST AND BOILING WATER

MARK's cry aroused Frank and the Norwegian sailor, and both looked eagerly in the direction pointed out.

"I see something," said Frank, after a searching look. "But if it is a ship or a small island I cannot tell."

"Da ship!" cried Sven Orlaff. "Da ship sure!"

"Do you mean your ship?" queried Mark.

"I no can say 'bout dat. Look lak my ship, but no sure."

For several minutes they watched the vessel in silence. Would it come toward them?

"Let us raise a signal of distress," said Frank. "Here, I'll put my shirt up on the end of a board." And this was done without delay.

"We mak big smoke—dat be verra goot," suggested Sven Orlaff, and began to kindle a blaze where the former fire had been. Over this he placed some wet bits of board which soon produced so much smoke that it nearly choked them.

"They ought to see that," said Frank.

"You must remember that this raft is much smaller than the ship, Frank," answered Mark, who was afraid of raising false hopes. "When we go down into a hollow of the sea we are completely out of their sight."

An anxious quarter of an hour went by, during which the ship seemed to come a little nearer.

"I believe she will come to us," said Mark, at last.

Both of the boys looked anxiously at the Norwegian sailor, feeling that he had more experience in such affairs than themselves.

Sven Orlaff shook his head sadly.

"Da ship go 'round—no will come here," he said.

"It won't!" gasped Mark and Frank in a breath.

And again the sailor shook his head. The lads gazed eagerly, with eyes almost starting from their sockets. Sven Orlaff was right—the distant object was slowly but surely fading from their vision.

The despair of the boys was now greater than ever, and for some time neither could trust himself to speak.

"It looks as if we were doomed," said Frank, at last, in a choking voice.

Mark did not answer. There seemed really nothing to say.

The sun had come out strong and hot, and it was not long before all began to feel thirsty once more. A little water remained in the hollow between the lumber and this they drank up, fearful that it would otherwise evaporate.

Night came on slowly and now they ate another portion of the fish. It seemed unusually dry and they choked it down with an effort.

"It's queer," observed Frank. "This fish tastes to me as if it was covered with fine dirt."

"It must be our mouths," replied Mark. "Mine feels full of grit, as if I had been licking a piece of emery paper."

They looked at Sven Orlaff, and found him rubbing his eyes. He seemed to be trying to get something out of them.

"My eye, he got da dust in," said the sailor. "I no lak dat. Where da dust he come from anna-how?" and he rubbed his eyes again.

"Why, the air is full of dust!" came from Frank, as he gazed upward. "Who ever heard of such a thing, so far out at sea!"

"We must be near land," said Mark. "Dust

couldn't come from anywhere else. But I can't see any land." And he took another look around—this time with difficulty, for the dust appeared to grow thicker.

When the sun went down it was in a curious haze, which the Norwegian sailor said was new to him. "Nefer see da sun lak dat," he said. "He look lak behine big smok." And the boys agreed with him.

"It seems to me it is growing warmer," came from Mark, as the darkness settled around them. "I feel—what was that, a gun?"

A deep booming had reached their ears, coming from a great distance. They listened and presently the sound was repeated, rolling away like distant thunder.

"Is that a thunder storm?" questioned Frank of the sailor.

"I t'ink no sturm. I t'ink dat be da breakers. But no can see him."

They looked around for the breakers, or for some sign of reefs, but darkness was now settled upon every side. The booming continued at long intervals, but they concluded that it must be miles away.

"I never heard of anything like it," came from

Mark. "First the dust and now this noise. It's certainly strange."

"The raft is moving swifter, too," returned Frank. "I've noticed it for some time. There must be some sort of a current here."

Their attention was now directed to this new discovery, and soon they noticed that the raft was certainly moving in a direction south-east by south, to use the nautical term. And it was going at the rate of twenty or thirty miles an hour!

"The whole ocean looks different here," said Mark, "What do you make of it?" he asked of Sven Orloff.

The Norwegian could not explain. He said the water had an appearance which he had never seen. On the surface was a sort of scum which, on being examined, proved to be, in part, of the dust they had previously noticed.

"Put your hand into the water," cried Frank. "It is surely warmer!"

They did so. Frank was right, the water was at least ten degrees hotter than it had been. Not only this, it was growing hotter each minute, until it got so they could scarcely put their hands into it.

"We are in for it now," muttered Mark. "I don't know what can be the matter, but something is surely wrong."

As if to add to the peril of the situation the raft now began to spin around and sank several feet, as if about to go down. All clutched each other, but soon the spinning ceased and the lumber moved onward as before, sending the flying spray in all directions. They had to cling fast with all their strength, for fear of being hurled off.

"If we were on a river I should say we were rushing for some cataract," said Mark. And then he added: "Don't you remember, Frank, how we went over that falls on the Orinoco?"

"I'll never forget it," answered Frank, with a shudder. "But, unless I am mistaken, this is going to prove a ten times worse adventure. That came to an end in short order—there is no telling where this will wind up."

Night had now settled down fully. There was no moon, and if the stars were shining they were obscured by the strange dust, which now came down as thickly as ever. They had to keep their eyes closed for the greater part and breathed only with difficulty.

"If only we would strike land of some sort," sighed Frank. "Even a few rocks with trees would be better than this boundless deep."

"I suppose the professor and Sam and Darry have given us up for lost," observed Mark.

"Perhaps the steamer went down, Mark. She must have been rammed fearfully by that heavy lumber vessel. A single stick of timber is a big battering-ram in itself."

They questioned the Norwegian sailor, but he could not tell how seriously the steamer had been injured. "Da water come ofer me," he said. "I mak big fight—no t'ink of da ships. I catch da lumber and hol' fast. Den da ships go away and no can see dem t'rough da sturm."

It was a night long to be remembered. The hours wore away slowly. Each took a nap in turn, while the other two remained on guard. Sound sleeping was out of the question, for there was no telling what would happen next. If the truth be told, the anxiety of the two boys was heartrending. They would have given all they possessed, or ever hoped to possess, to have been upon *terra firma* once more.

But all times must have an end, and gradually a light in the East proclaimed the coming of another

day. The sky was still murky, but not with the dust of the day before. Heavy clouds, not unlike thick smoke, hung over the southern horizon, and these gradually mounted higher and higher until the light of the rising sun was again obscured. The raft was moving on still, but more slowly. The water was just as hot as ever.

"Do you see anything?" questioned Frank, as Mark got up on the highest point of the lumber to look around.

"I think I do," was the slow answer. "Orlaff, look here."

The Norwegian sailor readily complied, and Frank joined the pair.

"Dare is somet'ing," said the sailor, slowly, pointing with his arm. "I t'ink he is a boat—yes, t'ree, four boats. And back in da cloud is a mountain."

"It must be land!" cried Mark. "Oh, I hope it is!"

"But what is that big cloud?" questioned Frank.

"Some sort of fire, I guess," returned Mark. "See! see! the boats are coming this way! Oh, Frank! we are saved!"

"I see more boats, Mark! Five, six, eight, ten,

—there must be at least twenty of them. The natives must be going out to fish.”

Wild with delight at the approach of the boats, they yelled at the top of their lungs and waved coats and the shirt frantically. Even Sven Orlaff joined in the demonstration, yelling in a voice that sounded as if it was coming through a megaphone.

“They see us!” cried Mark, after another painful pause. “See, they are heading this way!”

“Look! look!” screamed Mark, pointing beyond the boats. “What a fearfully black cloud! And it is rolling this way! And listen to the thunder? Frank, that cloud is rolling from the mountain, and I think I can see the flashes of lightning.”

It was all very strange to them, and they stared in open-mouthed wonder at the phenomenon. What it could mean they could not surmise. Then the raft began to whirl around and around, throwing them down in a heap, while the air became so murky and full of gas they could scarcely breathe. They clutched the lumber and the chains and held fast, and for the time being the boats in the distance were forgotten.

CHAPTER XXVIII

THE ERUPTION OF MONT PELEE

To those on board of the *Vendee* the hours dragged along dismally. Neither Sam nor Darry knew what to do, and Professor Strong was equally perplexed. The only person who was not deeply affected was Hockley.

"It's too bad," he said to Sam. "But it couldn't be helped, and we've got to make the best of it."

"You have never known what it is to have a real chum, Glummy," retorted Sam. "If you had one, and he was taken off as Frank and Mark have been, you wouldn't talk in this fashion. It's dreadful to think they have been drowned."

"Well, crying about it won't bring 'em back," answered the tall youth, unfeelingly.

"No, it won't, but—but I can't get over it yet—and perhaps I'll never get over it," came from Sam, and then he turned away, unwilling to continue the conversation with one so thoroughly unsympathetic.

Professor Strong walked the deck constantly. His mind was on the missing boys and on their fathers, whom he expected to meet at St. Pierre. What should he tell those parents when they met? He could well imagine their deep grief. And perhaps they would think it had been his fault that they had been washed overboard.

"I should have compelled them to remain in the cabin," he groaned to himself. "Yes, that was my duty, in such a storm as that! I wish they were back—I'd give all I possess to bring them back!" And he continued his unsatisfactory walk back and forth, until even kind hearted Captain Danvier grew tired of seeing the movements.

"You must calm yourself, my dear professor," he said, in French. "It is very sad, my heart goes out to you. I know what it is. And why not? My own brother was washed from the deck in a storm and never seen afterward. And I had to be captain just the same and bring my vessel to the end of her trip. It was awful! Yes, I know how to feel for you," and he clapped a friendly hand on Professor Strong's shoulder.

The air was murky and hot, so much so that even Sam and Darry noticed it. They saw the

cloud of smoke at a great distance, looking at it through a marine glass the captain loaned them.

"The cloud is hanging over the northern end of the island of Martinique," said the professor. "There must be some sort of a forest fire raging there."

Soon somebody on deck reported that his eyes were filled with dust. Half a dozen passengers and sailors were affected, and the dust became so thick that it covered everything and made it look gray. This was a most unusual occurrence and the professor was appealed to for an explanation.

"This appears to be pumice," he said, after an examination with a microscope. "And if it is, it is most likely of volcanic origin. Pumice is very light—so light that it will float on the water—which this is doing. It is formed, so scientists say, by the gas coming out of lava while the latter is in a melted state."

"But where does it come from?" questioned Darry, who could not help but be interested. "Is there any active volcano around here?"

"This pumice is so light that a fair wind will carry it for many miles, Dartworth."

"The wind is blowing up from the south-east,"

put in Sam. "Do you suppose it came from Martinique? That big black cloud looks suspicious to me."

"Perhaps Mont Pelee has become active again!" cried Darry. "It certainly looks so." And he pointed to the cloud, which looked blacker than ever.

"That is not impossible," said the professor. "You remember I told you that that volcano had been active many times in the past. But I doubt if the eruption will amount to anything. The volcano is considered to be about burnt out."

"Yes, it is no longer dangerous," put in Captain Danvier, speaking in French. "I myself was to the top with an excursion party but two months ago. There was a beautiful lake there and no sign of fire. An outbreak there would amount to but little." And then he told how he had often discussed the volcano with his friends at St. Pierre and Fort de France and how all had agreed that the volcano's activity was of the past,—that is, so far as its capabilities for doing much damage was concerned.

The dust proved so disagreeable that the professor and the boys remained in the cabin the greater part of the time. It was now noticed by the sailors that the sea was running in a strange manner and

that the flying spray was unusually warm. A bucket of water was hauled up for examination and all were astonished to learn how hot it was.

"Perhaps there has been an under-water eruption," said Professor Strong. "But that would not account for this thick dust. It is a most remarkable occurrence." He was so interested that for the moment his grief was forgotten.

They had been approaching the island from the north, and now they turned due southward, to run down the coast to the harbor of St. Pierre. Land was still but a speck in the distance when the darkness of night closed in on the steamer.

"When shall we get to St. Pierre?" asked Sam.

"We be dare by daylight," answered Captain Danvier. "Dat ees, if ze dust don't hold us back," and he smiled, as if he was not very much afraid.

Hardly had darkness settled down when the *Vendee* came to a sudden stop and began to drift. Inquiries brought forth the information that the engine had broken down, a portion of it having been badly jarred when the steamer collided with the Dutch lumber craft. There was no danger, and the chief engineer said he would be able to repair the damage long before daybreak.

"This will make little difference to us," said Professor Strong to the boys. "We will get into St. Pierre harbor early in the morning and that will do just as well as at night." He spoke thus, little dreaming of how much that delay meant to all on board.

When the sun arose the *Vendee* was still at rest on the bosom of the sea. But repairs were going forward rapidly, and by half past seven the engine was once more in good running order and the steamer resumed her course toward Martinique, which was now plainly visible in the distance.

The volcanic dust had cleared away to a great degree and over toward Mont Pelee, which arose majestically before them, only a small black cloud hovered.

"There is the smoking mountain," said the professor. "It doesn't look very alarming."

The *Vendee* was not making over six knots an hour, the engineer deeming it best not to strain the engine too greatly, so as they passed along the coast they could see the shipping of the island and the various industries. At one point they beheld a large smoking ruin close to the water's edge.

"That was a sugar factory—the Guerin," said

the captain, in French. "It has been burnt down. And see, the houses around it have been burnt down too."

"The whole district is burnt down!" cried Professor Strong. "There has been a serious calamity of some sort here. It looks to me as if the volcano had become active. See the wreckage drifting along the beach."

"We shall soon know," answered the commander of the steamer.

He turned to give some orders to his mate, leaving the boys and the professor standing at the rail. Scarcely had he disappeared when a fearful explosion in the distance burst upon the ears of all on board. The noise was so great that it almost stunned them.

"Oh, what's that?" cried Sam.

"Look! look!" yelled Darry. "The volcano!"

"The volcano! The volcano!" came the cry from all over the steamer. No one could say more than that, for there was not time, nor was there need. One look in the direction of Mont Pelee was enough to stagger the stoutest heart.

The whole top of the mountain seemed to have gone up like a discharge from a gigantic cannon. There was a vast cloud of blackness sweeping and

rolling in every direction, a blackness lit up by patches of fire of various colors. The cloud came on and on, growing larger and larger, until it hid the sun and made all as dark as night. The fire was everywhere, filling the air like rain.

The captain of the *Vendee* was calling to the wheelman to turn the steamer about when a mighty wave struck the craft, sending her staggering to starboard. The boys held on like grim death, Hockley shrieking in his terror. Then the vessel righted herself, only to be heeled over again, worse than before.

And now that cloud, or the extreme edge of it, reached them and a noxious gas made them gasp for breath. There was dust, mud and red-hot stones in that cloud, and they fell everywhere on the deck of the steamer as she turned to escape what looked like certain destruction. Some of the fire landed on the boys and the professor, and in a twinkling their clothes were aflame.

"Help! help!" roared Hockley. "I am burning up!" And then he made a dash for the cabin, slapping out the fire as he ran. The others came after him, putting out the flames as best they could.

All was confusion on board, the passengers run-

ning hither and thither, not knowing what to do. "The volcano is bursting!" was the cry. "We are doomed! The sea will open and swallow us!" Some fell upon their knees praying, others ran to the captain imploring him to run away from the land, while one nervous and highly excited old man leaped into the sea, to be seen no more.

The sea was now foaming and boiling on all sides of the ship. The hot stones as they fell sent up a loud hissing and some of them cracked open with pistol-like reports. The superheated mud was of a sticky nature and where it fell it dried fast like so much plaster.

In a few minutes the black cloud lifted somewhat, but the patches of fire came down as thickly as ever. The *Vendee* was set on fire in a score of places, the masts and tarry ropes flaming up like so many torches. She had now been turned about and was running for the open sea at the top speed of her engine.

"The ship is on fire! The ship is on fire!" Such was the cry taken up a minute later, when it was seen that the craft had righted and was running steadily on her new course. "We must put out the flames! Form a bucket brigade!" And this was

done, while the captain ordered the hose brought into use.

His first surprise over, Professor Strong grew calm, and at once set to work to do all in his power to assist in saving the *Vendee*. He found a bucket, filled it with water and started to put out the fire that had taken hold of a corner of the rear deck house. Without delay Sam and Darry joined him. Hockley remained in the cabin, wringing his hands in despair, afraid to remain alone and equally afraid to go outside, where the patches of fire still filled the air.

"Boys, you had better keep under shelter," panted Professor Strong, as he worked away vigorously, not only with the water bucket but also with a wet swab he had discovered. "This is highly dangerous, and——"

"No more so for us than for you," interrupted Sam. "It's our duty to do all we can."

"Creation! but this is awful!" panted Darry, as he too began to fight the flames with another bucket.

"Wet your jackets—I have wet my coat," said the professor. "And be careful of your eyes. I think we are getting out of the zone of fire," he added, as he cast an anxious eye shoreward, where

Mont Pelee was still belching forth death and destruction.

The two boys did as advised, and soon the three were working like Trojans, along with some other passengers and a number of the steamer's crew. The *Vendee* was now quivering from stem to stern under her full head of steam, for the engineer had been told of what had occurred and given to understand that they must either get away or go down in that awful holocaust behind them.

Darry and Sam had just procured fresh buckets of water and were doing their best to put out a patch of fire in a coil of ropes when they heard a groan from Professor Strong, who, bucket in hand, was staggering around clutching the air. Some hot volcanic dust had taken the professor full in the face, cutting off his breath.

"The professor is overcome!" cried Darry and threw down his bucket on the instant. Sam did the same, and both leaped forward just in time to save the man from falling. The next moment Professor Strong hung limply in their arms, his eyes closed. Not a sound came from him, nor did he appear to be breathing.

"He's dead!" muttered Sam, hoarsely. "Oh, Darry, this is the worst yet!"

CHAPTER XXIX

THE DESTRUCTION OF ST. PIERRE

AND now, while Mont Pelee is in full eruption, let us go ashore and learn what was happening in the city of St. Pierre, with its twenty-five thousand inhabitants and its five thousand refugees.

There had been more than one warning that this terrible catastrophe was at hand. For a number of days outbreaks of more or less importance had occurred, which had occasioned the lava dust and the strange condition of the water encountered so far out at sea.

The first intimation that the inhabitants of northern Martinique had that something was wrong was on Friday, April 25, 1902. On that day curious vapors were seen to be rising above Morne Lacroix, the highest summit of Pelee. A number of inhabitants went to investigate and found the water in the lake on the mountain top boiling and throwing off gases.

“We are going to have an eruption,” said some,

but the majority laughed and said it would amount to little or nothing.

The water in the lake continued to boil for several days, and then the volcano began to throw up mud and cinders, which fell on all sides of the crater. Still there was but little alarm, until on May 2d, when there came a shower of cinders which completely covered some of the villages near the mountain and even extended to certain portions of St. Pierre.

The alarm was now greater, but still it was argued that St. Pierre was safe. The leading newspaper of St. Pierre, *Les Colonies*, gave some interesting information about the outbreaks, and spoke about the fine dust which had entered every house and every store. This dust was so obnoxious that some of the places of business had felt compelled to close their doors. The inhabitants of the villages near to the angry mountain were now coming into St. Pierre for protection, and churches and many public buildings had to be opened for their benefit. It was reported that all vegetation around the mountain itself had disappeared and that even the roads and trails could no longer be found, owing to the cinders and mud.

For two days cinders and mud continued to come from the mountain and frequent explosions were heard accompanied by slight earthquakes. The streets of St. Pierre and other towns close to the mountain were covered with several inches of volcanic dust, and business came to a standstill. Many began to leave the northern end of the island, taking passage for Fort de France and other places further southward. But still the majority of the citizens of St. Pierre believed that the eruption would soon cease, and even the governor of the island advised them to remain by their property until the excitement was over.

The River Blanche flows down from Mont Pelee to the sea, midway between St. Pierre and the village of Precheur on the north. Near this stream stood the great Gurin sugar factory, with many valuable plantations around it. On May 5th it was noticed that the river was swelling and that its waters were of a black and gray color. Then the river rose with remarkable rapidity and began to boil, and the terror-stricken people near at hand saw that it was nothing more than a torrent of lava and mud from the mountain sweeping down to engulf them. On and on it came, leaping bridges

and low-lying fields, and in a few minutes not only the buildings of the factory, but also the beautiful villas of the owners, the houses of the workmen, and trees and all living things were swallowed up. The ocean went down a distance of thirty or forty feet, leaving parts of the harbor bottom dry at Precheur and at St. Pierre, and then arose with tremendous force, sweeping the shipping about, smashing small craft of all kinds, and causing a rush of people to the hills.

The alarm was now universal, and several meetings were held at St. Pierre and other places, to decide what was best to be done. The French war cruiser *Suchet* was called into service, to make an examination and give all the relief possible. To add to the horror St. Pierre was plunged into darkness that night, the electric light plant failing to work.

For two days the terror of the people continued, and now they were leaving, or trying to leave, as fast as they could make the necessary arrangements. Those who owned valuable property hated, of course, to give it up, and some said they would remain to the end, no matter what occurred. There were constant showers of dust, and muddy rains, and frequent

rumblings as of thunder. Some parties that went out to explore in the vicinity of the mountain reported that all was chaos within three miles of Pelee, and that at some points the lava and mud lay to a depth of ten feet.

The next day was Thursday, May 8th. It was Ascension Day, and early in the morning the cathedral in St. Pierre and the churches were open for divine service. A heavy cloud hung over Mont Pelee, that same cloud which those on board of the *Vendee* saw and which caused poor Frank and Mark on their raft so much uneasiness.

And then the great eruption.

What the people of St. Pierre thought of that fearful outburst no one can tell, for out of that vast number, estimated at between twenty-five thousand to thirty-one thousand people, not a single person remained alive to tell the tale! Surely such an awful record is enough to sadden the hardest heart.

Having already viewed this scene from the deck of the *Vendee* we know that there was scant warning of this mighty outburst. From out of the depths of Pelee issued mud, lava, stones, and a gigantic volume of gas that rolled and fell directly down

upon the doomed city, cutting off every particle of life-giving air and suffocating and burning wherever it landed. Men, women, and children were struck down where they stood, without being able to do anything to save themselves. The explosions of the gases, and the shock of an earthquake, made hundreds of buildings totter and fall, and the rain of fire, a thousand times thicker here than out on the ocean, soon completed the work of annihilation. St. Pierre, but a short time before so prosperous and so happy, was no longer a city of the living but had become a cemetery of the dead.

It was something of this last outburst that reached Mark and Frank and the Norwegian sailor, as they clung fast to the lumber raft as it whirled and rocked in the boiling sea that raged on all sides of them. Then a cloud as black as night swept over them, so that they could scarcely see each other.

"What can it be?" murmured Mark. "Is it the end of the world?"

"The world is on fire!" shrieked Sven Orlaff, in his native tongue. "The Lord God have mercy on us!" And he began to pray earnestly. The boys did not understand him, but in the mind of each

was likewise a prayer, that God would bring them through that terrible experience in safety.

At last the cloud lifted a bit and the sea became somewhat calmer. Part of the lumber had become loosened and drifted off, so that the raft was scarcely half as big as before. In the excitement Mark had had his leg severely bruised and Frank's left hand was much scratched and was bleeding, but neither paid attention to the hurts.

"The boats—where are they?" questioned Mark, trying to clear his eyes that he might see. All had drifted out of sight but one, a craft with a single sail, which the strange current had sent close beside them. This boat was filled to overflowing with people, Frenchmen and negroes, all as terror-stricken as themselves.

"Help! Help us!" called the boys, and Sven Orloff added a similar appeal. But no help could be given—the boat was already overloaded—and soon wind and current carried her out of sight through the smoke and dust and the rolling sea.

Slowly the hours passed and gradually the sky cleared, although over Mont Pelee still hung that threatening cloud of death. The sea remained hot,

and as the lumber raft drifted southward it encountered numerous heaps of wreckage. Far off could be seen the ruins of buildings which still smoked and occasionally blazed up.

"It's a tremendous volcanic explosion," said Mark, at last. "I believe Mont Pelee has blown its head off."

"Look! Look!" cried Sven Orlaff. "Da boat! We git da boat!"

He pointed but a short distance away. A boat was drifting toward them, a craft probably twenty-five feet in length and correspondingly broad of beam. The boat had had a mast but this was broken off short and hung, with the sail, over the side.

Soon the boat bumped up against the lumber raft and they caught hold of the wreckage and held fast. The body of the craft was in good condition and they immediately leaped into the boat and began to clear away the fallen mast and the sail with its ropes. There were some signs of fire both at the bow and the stern but this had done little but char the seats and gunwale. In the bottom of the boat rested a keg and several boxes.

"This is much better than the lumber," observed Frank, when they were safely on board and had

saved part of the mast and the sail. "I suppose this boat either went adrift or the persons in her were drowned. What do you suppose is in the keg and in the boxes?"

"Water in da keg," announced the sailor, after an examination. He took a long drink and the boys did the same. The water was very warm but to their parched throats it was like nectar.

On breaking open the boxes they were found to contain eatables of various kinds, evidently packed for a trip of several days. At once all fell to, eating the first "square" meal they had had since drifting around.

"There, that puts new life into a fellow," exclaimed Mark, when he had finished. "Now let us hoist that mast and sail and steer for St. Pierre."

"Do you believe this eruption reached that city?" questioned Frank, with a look of new alarm suddenly showing itself on his worn face.

Mark gazed back blankly for an instant. "Great Cæsar, Frank! If it did, and your father and mine were there——" Mark could not finish.

With sober faces the two boys assisted Sven Orloff to hoist the broken mast and fix it in place with ropes, of which, fortunately there were plenty,

they having been dragging in the water, thus escaping the fire. Then the sail was hoisted, and they began a slow journey southward, in the direction of St. Pierre harbor.

As the boat advanced more wreckage was encountered, and once they passed a small raft filled with household goods. On top of the goods lay the half burnt bodies of several people. Then they passed the bodies of several cows and of a horse, and the wreckage became thicker and thicker. The sights made them shudder and grow sick at heart.

Night found them still on the sea, some distance west of St. Pierre, for they had missed their reckoning by over a mile, Sven Orlaff being but a common sailor and understanding little more of steering than themselves. A horrible smell reached them, coming from the distant shore.

When day dawned, it found them somewhat rested and eager to get closer to land, although they determined not to go ashore until they felt it would be safe to do so. Each of the boys was thinking of his father. Was it possible that St. Pierre had been overcome and were their parents dead?

As last they made out the distant city, and the harbor dotted here and there with the burnt shipping.

Directly in the roadstead rested the wrecked and burnt hulk of a big steamship, the *Roraima*, of the Quebec line. The *Roraima* had been caught with twenty-one passengers and a crew of forty-seven on board, and of that number less than a third were saved and many of these were horribly crippled for life.

“Another ship! A man-of-war!” cried Frank, and he was right. Close at hand was the big warship, the *Suchet*, sent north once more from Fort de France to investigate the happenings of St. Pierre. The captain of the warship had just taken on board the survivors from the *Roraima*, and now a hail was sent to our friends and they too were assisted to the deck.

CHAPTER XXX

LOOKING FOR THE MISSING ONES

"OH, Mark, the city is laid in ashes! Nobody escaped!"

It was Frank who uttered the words, after a French naval officer, who could speak English, had explained the situation.

"But some people must have gotten away," insisted Mark, unwilling to believe the awful facts. "Remember how we found our boat, and how we saw those other boats further up the coast. They must have had warning enough."

"But the fiery blast came so quickly," went on the younger youth. "Those from the *Roraima* say it came in one gigantic swoop that swept everything before it. If that is so, and our fathers were in the city——"

"We must go ashore and make a search, Frank—that is, as soon as it is safe to do so. I wonder where the *Vendee* is?"

"There is no telling. If she was in the harbor

perhaps she was burnt up like the *Roraima* and those other craft lying about," answered Frank, dismally.

It was truly a trying time on board of the war-ship, where the cries of those suffering from burns could be plainly heard. The boys wanted to help, but were told there were plenty of doctors for that purpose. In the meantime Sven Orlaff had made himself at home among the sailors.

Two hours later found the lads on shore, in company with a searching party sent to bring in any persons who might be found alive. The landing was made in a small boat some distance south of the fallen city. There were two priests and several naval officers, and also half a dozen Frenchmen, and two Americans who had business interests in that locality.

It was with extreme difficulty that the boys picked their way along, over the trunks of fallen trees and over rocks which were still hot to the touch. Everything was blasted as if by a lightning stroke and covered with mud, lava and ashes. Nothing could be seen of the roadway, which was buried beneath stones, brick and other debris.

The boys had been told in their letters that their parents would stop at the Hotel Rosa, on the Rue de

Victor Hugo, one of the principal streets of St. Pierre. One of the Americans in the party, John Waterbury by name, was bound for this street, and the boys plodded along beside him.

It took them two hours to gain the neighborhood, so great were the ruins on all sides. Dead bodies were everywhere in evidence, some buried under tons and tons of fallen stones and bricks. Even the great cathedral and the massive bank buildings had not escaped. At last John Waterbury came to a halt and heaved a deep sigh.

"As I thought," he said. "Do you see yonder pile of smoking ruins? That was where our three-storyed business building stood, with a stock of goods worth thirty thousand dollars. It is gone—every dollar of it—and my two partners and our four clerks have probably lost their lives also."

"It is awful!" murmured Mark. He could scarcely speak. "Simply awful! And where was the—the Hotel Rosa?" he faltered.

"That building over yonder. I can tell it only by that twisted iron railing of the balcony. I have sat on that balcony many a time with my feet on the railing. It doesn't seem to be destroyed as utterly as our building, but it is pretty well riddled."

And riddled it was, from top to bottom, with the back and one side wall completely demolished. In the street the wreckage lay five or six feet deep, and over all was the mud and lava dust, still hot. The boys' feet were uncomfortably warm and looking at their shoes they found that the soles were seared as by a hot iron.

There was no sign of life about the hotel. In one of the windows hung the half doubled up body of a man, burnt beyond all possible recognition. As the lads gazed at it a shiver passed over them impossible to suppress. Could that be—but no, it was too horrible—they would not believe it.

“Let us go!” whispered Frank, hoarsely. “I—I can't stand it!” And he swayed as if about to faint.

Mark caught his chum by the arm, and both picked their way to where they had left John Waterbury. Nothing could be accomplished while the ruins were so hot, and the American business men accompanied them back to the shore below St. Pierre. Here they learned that the warship had sailed to another quarter of the island, but a relief boat named the *Ridalla* was at hand, and they were taken on board this craft and made to feel at home.

From those on board of the *Ridalla*, Mark and Frank learned that the *Vendee* had been spoken several hours before, and that the steamer was now heading back to Martinique. She had suffered, as we already know, but nothing had been lost but a number of ropes and a corner of the cabin, which were burnt away.

"I'm glad they are safe," said Mark. "The *Vendee* might have suffered like the *Roraima* and those other ships."

An hour later a lookout announced the appearance of the *Vendee*, and not long after this the steamer came into the harbor and dropped anchor. At once Mark and Frank begged to be taken on board and their wish was speedily granted.

"Mark! Frank!" The cry came from Darry, who chanced to be on deck, and the next moment the lad was fairly hugging the pair. "Well of all that is wonderful! We had given you both up as lost!"

"We've had a hard time of it," answered Mark. "How did you make out?"

"Oh, we caught our share too, I can tell you that. The fire rained all over the ship and we had to fight it like mad for over an hour. The professor was

overcome and Sam and I were afraid he was dead. But he got over it after a while, and now he is as well as ever. I suppose St. Pierre is a sight. But tell me how you escaped being drowned. But no, come into the cabin first and see the others."

Darry led the way, and soon they ran into all the others of the party. There was another joyous greeting, in which even Hockley had the good sense to join. Then each party had to tell its story, to which the other listened with breathless attention.

"You were more than fortunate," said Professor Strong, after Mark and Frank had finished. "Getting aboard that lumber raft, and later on the small boat, was certainly providential. And we were equally fortunate in being delayed by the breaking down of the engine. Had it not been for that the *Vendee* would surely be lying a wreck in St. Pierre harbor."

Captain Danvier was glad to see the boys, and from them learned the particulars concerning the lumber vessel that had been struck.

"They will not prosecute me at law," he said to Professor Strong, in French. "They knew the collision was as much their fault as mine." And so it proved. Later on the Dutch owners of the lumber

boat sent several threatening communications, and Captain Danvier answered in an equally threatening manner; and there the matter rested. It may be as well to add that Sven Orlaff never went back to the lumber boat, but enlisted instead in the service of a packet line running from the West Indies to Brazil.

Word soon came for Captain Danvier to take his vessel to Fort de France, and he sailed to that port with our friends on board. Sam and Darry had wanted to go ashore to inspect the ruins but Hockley had objected strongly.

"I don't want to run any more risks," said the tall youth. "I want to get just as far away from that volcano as possible."

They found Fort de France a busy place. It was fast filling up with refugees from all parts of Martinique, and many public buildings had been thrown open for the accommodation of the newcomers. More than this, relief was already pouring in from many places, including the United States, where the news of the terrible catastrophe had shocked the whole nation.

Professor Strong would have been willing to leave the West Indies without delay, but Frank and Mark stoutly objected to going before they had

learned something concerning their fathers, and he did not care to sail without them.

"I'm going to make a systematic search," said Mark to Frank, after several days had been spent in Fort de France. "It is possible that your father and mine came down here from St. Pierre." And he and Frank did make a search which lasted forty-eight hours.

It was then that they ran across a Frenchman who was in the business of exporting dyewoods. The Frenchman had met Mr. Robertson and Mr. Newton twice, and transacted some business with both.

"They were up at St. Pierre three days before the great eruption," said the dyewoods exporter, who could speak good English. "They told me that they were going to make a journey overland to Basse Pointe, on the north coast. Whether they started before St. Pierre fell, or whether they were caught on the way, I cannot tell."

This conversation filled Mark and Frank with renewed hope that their parents might have escaped, and they talked the matter over with Professor Strong and Sam and Darry.

"Basse Pointe is a small town lying almost directly north of Mont Pelee," said the professor. "It

is just as close to the volcano as St. Pierre and has suffered a good deal, so they say, although not as much as the city."

"But couldn't we go up there in some kind of a boat, or overland?" questioned Mark, eagerly. "Perhaps my father and Frank's are up there?"

The professor said he would make inquiries, and set about doing so without delay. He could find no boat running to Basse Pointe, but there was a native craft about to sail for St. Marie, a village about ten miles below the point they wished to gain.

"Then I'm going to St. Marie and travel overland to Basse Pointe," said Mark, and Frank said the same.

"And I'll go with you," put in Sam.

"Ditto myself," chimed in Darry. "I want to see something of this volcanic eruption before I leave Martinique."

"Well, you fellows can go," came from Hockley. "But you won't budge me. If there comes another downpour of lava, rocks and mud you'll all be killed."

Darry was about to say something about a coward, when Mark stopped him. "We don't want

Hockley anyway," he whispered. "And it is just as dangerous as he says."

Another talk followed, and it was hard work for the boys to get Professor Strong to consent to the plan. But the professor was secretly as eager as any of them, for he knew that the scientific magazines would welcome an article from his pen describing the condition of this territory immediately after the great eruption.

"I cannot blame Mark and Frank for wanting to go," he said. "But as to you, Samuel, and Dartworth——"

"Oh, you must consent!" interrupted Darry. "What are we journeying around for if not to see the sights? And this is such a sight as comes only once in a lifetime." So it was settled; and that evening found the five on the ship bound for St. Marie. Hockley was left at a hotel in Fort de France to await their return.

CHAPTER XXXI

DANGEROUS VOLCANO EXPLORING

THE journey to St. Marie was made without special incident, and thirty-six hours later the party landed in the little village, to find it all but deserted. Many of the inhabitants had fled in boats and others had journeyed overland to Fort de France.

On landing, the boys and the professor lost no time in making inquiries concerning the road to Basse Pointe. They were told that it ran along the shore, past Grand Anse, another village, also deserted. There were a number of bridges to cross, and whether these were in good condition nobody could tell.

"This is getting more risky," observed the professor, but at that moment a black man came up who could speak English, and he offered to guide them to any point they wished to go providing they would pay him a sum equal to five dollars per day,—this amount being a small fortune to the fellow.

"We'll take you up, Gambo," said the professor. "Let us start at once." And they set off, each carry-

ing some food with him, for there was no telling what desolation lay in store for them.

Gambo was a bright, intelligent fellow, and under his guidance they made rapid progress. By nightfall they reached Grand Anse, to find it covered with volcanic dust and stones. Only four natives had remained there, and they said they were going to depart as soon as a certain boat came back for them. They asked Gambo about the Americans, and then said they had seen some other Americans up in the mountains, the day before the awful eruption.

"They must have been Mark's father and mine!" cried Frank, excitedly. "Ask them where they went to?"

Gambo did so. The reply was uncertain. The Americans had been at a small settlement called Frodamalos but where they had gone after that was not known.

"Where is Frodamalos?" questioned Professor Strong.

"Up the mountainside," answered Gambo. "It is close to Pelee."

"I don't care—I'm going anyway," said Frank. "I don't believe we are going to have any more eruptions—at least, not right away."

Again there was a conference, but in the end the professor yielded, and they went forward towards the interior of Martinique. The lofty height of Mont Pelee was before them, still crowned with black smoke and many-colored vapor. The mighty giant was resting, preparatory to a greater exhibition of strength.

The evidences of the fearful eruption were more and more pronounced as they advanced. Down near the shore the vegetation had been only dust covered, here it was literally burnt up. The trees were stripped bare, leaving only the black trunks standing. The ground was cracked in a thousand places, while here and there were large deposits of mud and lava, twisted and turned into all sorts of curious shapes. Occasionally they passed the bones of some animal, and in one spot they came upon the partly consumed bodies of two natives who had died locked in each other's arms. At the sight of the dead natives Gambo fell upon his knees in horror. Then of a sudden he leaped up, turned, and fled in the direction from whence he had come, running as if a legion of demons were at his heels.

"He has deserted us," said the professor, after calling for the negro to come back. "Even the

offer of five dollars per day in gold couldn't hold him after such a sight."

"But I am not going to turn back," said Mark, with set teeth, and he strode on, with Frank beside him; and the others followed.

It was hard walking and climbing, and frequently they had to pause to get their breath. The air seemed to grow more suffocating as they drew nearer to the volcano.

"It is the gas," said Professor Strong. "I think we had better go back." And he shook his head doubtfully.

"There are the ruins of a village!" exclaimed Sam, pointing to a hill on their left. "That must be Frodamalos."

Without replying Mark led the way toward the spot pointed out. They had to cross a bed of lava and mud that was still warm, and then leap a wide ravine before they could get close to the wreckage of huts and houses.

"Not a person in sight, nor a dead body," remarked Frank, as they gazed about them. "That looks encouraging. Everybody here evidently got out before the big explosion."

"Let us go a little closer to the volcano, now we

are here," suggested Sam. "I don't believe there is any immediate danger of another outburst."

The sight of the lofty mountain, with its smoke and vapor, was a fascinating one, and cautiously they moved forward once more until they could see the openings and the streams of lava quite plainly. The top of the mountain appeared to be split into several sections, and at one point they could see a ruddy glow that betokened a vast fire beneath.

"Come, let us go back," said Professor Strong, decidedly. "This is far too dangerous. We have seen enough." And he caught Mark and Frank by the arm.

"Look! look!" cried Darry, pointing with his hand. "The fire is growing brighter!"

"And the lava is beginning to flow again!" ejaculated Sam. "You are right, professor, we had best get away from here!"

All looked back and saw that Sam was right. The lava was beginning to flow from two of the vents in the mountain top. It was a steaming, hissing and dangerous looking mass, and began to move down on both sides of them.

"We must run for it!" exclaimed Professor

Strong. "If we do not that lava may cut off our retreat. Come!" And he set off, with all of the boys around him.

It was no easier to descend the mountain side than it had been to come up. Rocks and loose stones were numerous, and it appeared to them that some of the cracks in the surface were wider than before. Once Darry stumbled and fell, and the wind was knocked out of him so completely that the others had to help him up and hold him for a moment. Then they turned in the wrong direction and encountered a bed of half-dried mud into which they sunk up to their shoe tops.

"Hi! this won't do!" called out Sam, who was in the lead. "We'll all be stuck like flies on fly-paper. We'll have to go to the right." And this they did.

Looking back they saw that the lava was now flowing at a greater rate than ever. It hissed and steamed viciously, as if anxious to overtake them. The main flow on their right had divided into two streams and one of these was coming straight for them!

"We must get to the other side of yonder split

in the rocks!" cried Professor Strong. "It's our only hope. Come, boys!" And he urged them before him.

The crevasse he mentioned was a good fifty yards away, and now the lava was approaching with incredible swiftness, like some fiery serpent bent upon their destruction. On and on they sped, until their breath came thick and fast and poor Frank felt on the point of fainting away. The professor caught him by the shoulder and almost dragged him to the edge of the opening.

With the lava at their very heels the boys and Professor Strong made the leap over the wide crevasse. The professor had Frank by the hand and went over in safety with his charge, and the leaps of Mark and Darry were equally successful. But poor Sam, as he started to jump, slipped and fell.

"Help!" cried Sam, and then half fell across the opening, to clutch at the edge of the crevasse with his hands. There was next to nothing to hold to, and he was on the point of dropping out of sight when Mark made a dive for him, followed by Darry. Each caught a wrist in his grasp and pulled with all of his strength, and in a moment more Sam was



“ Help ! ” cried Sam, and then half fell across the opening. — *Page 312.*

safe. But the escape had been a narrow one, and the youth was as pale as a sheet.

As the whole party collected on the opposite side of the opening the lava poured into it with an increased hissing and a rapid rising of steam. Then, as the lava struck some water far below, there was a loud report, followed by others.

"Come, we have no time to waste!" went on the professor. "That opening will soon fill up and then the lava will be after us again. We must get down to the ocean without delay."

Again they went on, this time in an irregular line, each holding on to the others. Frank had a stitch in the side, and so had Darry, but neither dared to complain. They knew it was a run for life.

At last they came in sight of the sea, far below them, for they had come out on something of a cliff. There was a rough path leading downward, and over this they stumbled, they could scarcely tell how, afterward. Then they ran out along a broad beach. They saw a boat not far away and called loudly to those on board.

At first the craft refused to come in for them. It was a small affair, manned by two Frenchmen. But

Professor Strong promised the sailors a big reward for their assistance, and presently our friends were taken aboard.

"That ends volcano exploring for me," gasped Sam, when they were safe on board. "That was a close shave."

"It certainly was," came from Darry. "It was only that split in the earth that saved us from that stream of lava."

Neither Mark nor Frank said anything. The exploration, so far as finding out anything about their parents was concerned, had been a failure.

The French sailors were bound for St. Pierre by way of the north passage around the island, and there was nothing to do but to remain on board until the capital city was reached. It was now seen that Mont Pelee was getting ready for another eruption.

This outburst, four-fold greater than those already described, occurred the next day, while the small craft was well away from the shore. The thunder and lightning from the volcano were something stupefying, and tremendous masses of rocks and lava were hurled forth, to lay the whole northern end of Martinique in complete desolation. The ruins of St. Pierre were all but buried from sight, and the

force of the eruption was felt even as far south as Fort de France, where much dust and not a few stones fell, to add to the terror of a population already on the verge of despair.

It may be as well to add here that Martinique was at these trying times not the only island in that vicinity to suffer from volcanic action. On St. Vincent, a British possession one hundred miles further south, the volcano called La Soufriere went into equal activity, and an eruption at Mont Pelee was usually attended by a similar happening at the other volcano, showing that the two were most likely in some way connected. The activity of La Soufriere threw the natives of St. Vincent into a panic, and although but few people, comparatively, were killed, yet they flocked to Kingstown, the capital, and many begged the government to aid them in getting away. It was a time of great anxiety in all the Lesser Antilles and many predicted that all these islands, which as already mentioned, are in reality nothing but the tops of a long range of mountains, would either blow up or sink into the sea.

CHAPTER XXXII

THE FATE OF CAPTAIN SUDLIP

By the time the small native craft reached the vicinity of St. Pierre the great eruption was at an end, and Pelee had once more resumed its normal condition, saving for the cloud of black smoke and the strange vapor still clinging to its lofty top. Even from a great distance, however, it could be noticed that the top of the grand old mountain was split into several parts.

In the harbor of St. Pierre were collected a dozen or more steamers sent from various ports to give aid to the sufferers who were flocking in from many of the outlying districts. Provisions were to be had in plenty, and also clothing, while a score or more of surgeons and physicians stood ready to care for the sick, the wounded and the dying.

“What an awful scene of desolation!” remarked Sam, as they gazed at the distant ruin of the once prosperous city. “Everything seems to be buried under the fall of lava and mud.”

"Yes, and the lava has turned to stone," added Mark. "I don't believe they will ever rebuild this place."

"It is not likely," said Professor Strong. "Or, if they do, it will not be for many years. In my opinion the whole north end of Martinique will be abandoned, for there is no telling how soon Mont Pelee will belch forth again."

It was not long after this that they passed the wreckage of a French sailing vessel which had been burnt near to the north shore of St. Pierre. Another boat was at hand, transferring such of the cargo as remained undamaged.

"I wonder what craft that is?" said Frank. "It looks something like a boat we saw in the harbor of Havana."

"She is from Havana," said a Frenchman, who was at hand, working. "The *Raven*, Captain Sudlip."

"Captain Sudlip!" came from several of the boys.

"Was his full name Jason Sudlip?" questioned Professor Strong, with equal interest.

"Yes. Then you knew him?"

"We did. But we didn't know he was captain of a schooner like this."

"It was a new command for him. At the last moment the regular captain of the *Raven* was taken sick and Captain Sudlip took his place. Poor fellow, it was a fatal trip for him."

"Is Captain Sudlip dead?" questioned Darry.

"Not dead, but horribly burnt. They have taken him to the hospital at Roseau, on the island of Dominica, but the doctors say he cannot live."

The Frenchman resumed his work, and the craft containing our friends moved off down the coast. For some minutes nobody spoke. Then Darry heaved a long sigh.

"It's horrible!" he murmured. "Horrible! Captain Sudlip wasn't our friend, but I pity him."

"And so do I pity him," put in Sam. "I trust his case isn't as bad as reported."

This was all that was said, but nobody forgot the matter until a long time after. It may be as well to state here that the captain was in a very bad way and that he died inside of the week.

It was utterly impossible to think of going ashore at St. Pierre, and fearful of another eruption which might cost them their lives, Professor Strong procured passage on a little ferry steamer which had

formerly run regularly between the fallen city and Fort de France.

Turning southward again made the hearts of Mark and Frank sink like lead within their bosoms. Their thoughts were constantly on their parents.

"I can't give my father up—I simply can't!" said Frank to his chum, in a choking voice. "It's too awful to think of!"

"I feel exactly the same, Frank," answered the older youth. "But what more can we do?"

"I am going to make more inquiries when we reach Fort de France."

"Oh, I shall do that, too."

On the way down the coast they fell in with many vessels, all going to St. Pierre to give aid to those who, alas, were beyond human needs. These craft moved along silently, nobody feeling in the humor to even discuss the situation.

As soon as they landed at the capital city they started for the post-office, to learn if anything in the shape of a letter had been left for one or another of the party. They found the streets crowded with people of all nationalities and for the first time learned how Fort de France had received a shower

of dust and stones, and how everybody had been terrorized and business brought to a standstill.

"It's a fearful state of affairs," said Sam. "They won't recover from this for years."

"St. Pierre will never recover, Samuel," returned the professor. "The eruption has——"

Professor Strong stopped short, for a cry from Mark had interrupted him. The youth was pointing up a street to their left.

"See! see! There is a crowd of negroes and they are beating a white man! If somebody don't help the white fellow they will kill him!"

They started forward, and were soon on the edge of the crowd which numbered fully a dozen colored men. In the very midst was the white man Mark had mentioned. His hat was off, his collar and tie loose, his shirt torn, and he was fighting desperately. One cheek was bleeding from a long cut and his left arm hung limply at his side.

"It is Dan Markel!" ejaculated Darry. "Dan Markel, the fellow who once swindled Hockley!"

The crowd around the man was yelling fiercely and striking at every available opportunity. Dan Markel was yelling in return, but nobody appeared to listen to him.

"We must do something, or he'll surely be killed," said Frank.

By this time Professor Strong was close to the crowd. "Stop!" he called out, in French. "Stop! What does this mean?"

"He is a rascal!" said one native, wrathfully. "He is not fit to live!"

"He robbed the dead," said another. "We saw him doing it—up at the Ladarosa plantation."

"Let me go!" screamed Markel, in English. "It's all a mistake."

By this time the crowd was growing larger, and the shouting continued, until to make out what one individual was saying was impossible. Those nearest to Markel continued to strike at the man from Baltimore, until he went down from a blow on the head, and several in the crowd fell on top of him.

It was at this critical moment that several *gens-d'armes* appeared. They were doing police duty in that neighborhood, and at once set to work to restore peace. But it was not without great difficulty that they succeeded in quieting the negroes, who insisted upon it that Dan Markel be arrested.

"He is a looter—a robber of the dead," said one

of the natives. And then he explained that he was an assistant foreman on the Ladarosa plantation not far from St. Pierre. The master of the plantation had been killed, along with several others of the household, while the negroes had fled to a rocky cave for safety. On returning to the house two days after the first eruption they had found Dan Markel there and in the act of stealing the silverware and jewelry. Markel had escaped them but they remembered his face well.

The man from Baltimore tried to deny this story, saying he had reached Fort de France from La Guayra that morning, but on being searched some jewelry which the negroes identified was found in his pockets. He was at once marched off to the local jail, there to await trial, the natives following the *gens-d'armes* to see that the prisoner did not get away.

"It will go hard with Markel," said Darry. "Robbery under such circumstances becomes a double crime."

"In some countries such looters would be hung," answered Professor Strong. "You may depend upon it that Markel will get the full penalty of the law."

"This will please Hockley," came from Sam. "He was always sorry the rascal got away. I wonder if Hockley is still up at the hotel?" he continued.

"I shouldn't be surprised if he got out of Fort de France when that shower of dust and stones came," returned Mark. "He was scared to death as it was."

A short while later found them at the post-office asking for letters. Owing to the general disorder it was half an hour before any mail was handed out.

The first communication proved to be from Hockley, and was addressed to Professor Strong. It was short, and had evidently been written while the youth was in an excited frame of mind. It ran as follows:

"DEAR PROFESSOR: It looks now as if this island was doomed and I don't propose to be burnt up or be drowned. There is a steamer sailing from here to Port-of-Spain, Trinidad, and other ports in South America, and I have secured passage. If I stop off at Port-of-Spain you can look for me at the hotel at which we stopped before, and if I go further I

will leave word in a letter at the post-office. Have cabled my father to send necessary money."

"I knew Hockley wouldn't stay," said Darry. "I'll wager he was almost paralyzed with terror." And he was right. Hockley had acted so thoroughly scared that he had made himself the laughing stock of all, both at the hotel and on board the steamer on which he had secured passage. It was to be some time before they would see their tall traveling companion again.

CHAPTER XXXIII

A HAPPY MEETING—CONCLUSION

THE letter from Hockley read, they waited patiently until some mail matter which had just come in should be sorted out. This took the best part of an hour—a wait which to Mark and Frank seemed an age.

But at last the little window was opened once more and the crowd surged forward. Professor Strong was well to the front and presently they saw him turn from the window with half a dozen communications held aloft.

“Letters!” cried Frank. “Oh, if only they bring good news!”

The professor was soon beside them. There were letters for all, but just then the interest was concentrated on a communication addressed to Mark and another addressed to Frank. Both bore the postmark of Kingstown, St. Vincent.

“My father’s handwriting!” cried Mark, in a trembling voice.

“And this is in my father’s hand!” came from Frank, falteringly. His hand shook so he could not open the envelope. “Yo—you read it, professor.”

Professor Strong did so. The communication had been written the day before and ran in this wise:

“MY DEAR SON FRANK:

“I am writing this in the hope that you are safe despite the fearful volcano eruptions which have taken place in this quarter of the globe. I know you were bound for St. Pierre, but I have learned that by the goodness of an all-wise Providence the *Vendee* escaped the eruption that destroyed St. Pierre and all the shipping in that harbor.

“Mr. Robertson and myself have had a narrow escape from death, and we do not yet know if we are entirely safe, for the volcano on this island is now as active as that on Martinique. We were within four miles of Mont Pelee when the eruption of May 8th occurred. We escaped by what was little short of a miracle, and were lucky enough to get on a trading vessel bound for this port. I had my lower limbs and feet considerably burnt, and Mr. Robertson suffered from burns on his feet and on his left arm. But none of the burns are serious,

and we are resting here quite comfortably. If we were well enough we would set out in search of you, but as it is neither of us can do any walking at present.

“I am sending this letter in duplicate to half a dozen ports in this territory, and Mr. Robertson is sending similar letters addressed to Mark. As soon as you receive a letter let me hear from you, as both of us are anxious for news. And also send word home if you are safe. Address me at the Windsor Hotel, Kingstown, Island of St. Vincent.”

“Oh, how glad I am that they are safe!” murmured Frank, and then he looked at Mark, who had been reading his own letter. There were tears in the eyes of both and that look meant more than any words of mine can tell.

“I must go to Kingstown at once,” said Mark. “I can’t be satisfied until I see for myself just how they are faring.”

“And I will go with you,” answered Frank. “Perhaps the burns are worse than we imagine. I know father. He wouldn’t want to worry me.”

The matter was talked over by all, and in the end Professor Strong agreed to see about passage to

St. Vincent. Darry and Sam wanted to keep with Frank and Mark, and the whole party sailed southward the next morning at sunrise.

The run to St. Vincent, past the Island of St. Lucia, which, strange to say, had entirely escaped the eruptions on both sides of it, was made without anything unusual occurring. While still some miles north of the island for which they were bound they could see the smoke of La Soufriere and through the marine glasses took note of some of the terrible damage done.

"It is very fortunate that no large city was located near this volcano," said Professor Strong. "No living thing could have escaped such an outburst as has taken place here."

When the vessel reached Kingstown harbor the boys could scarcely wait to get ashore. They learned that the Windsor Hotel was in a suburb, and hired a carriage to take them to the hostelry.

"There is father now!" cried Frank, as they entered the beautiful grounds, and he pointed to a figure reclining in an invalid chair on the veranda.

"And my father is there, too!" exclaimed Mark.

In another moment they were out of the carriage and rushing up the veranda steps. As they came

closer both Mr. Newton and Mr. Robertson sat up to greet them.

“My boy!” cried Mr. Newton, and flung his arms around Frank. “My own boy!”

“Mark!” came from Mr. Robertson, and his face broke out into a warm smile of welcome. “We were just talking about you and wondering if we would get a letter.”

“You don’t know how glad I am to see you, even like this, father,” answered Mark. “We were afraid you had been burnt up.”

“Yes, and we went on a regular search for both of you,” broke in Frank.

“And they came pretty close to losing their own lives in that search,” came from the professor, as he shook hands.

“Then you went ashore—” began Mr. Newton, in wonder.

“Yes, we went volcano exploring,” said Darry.

“And we climbed Mont Pelee,” finished Sam.

“I don’t believe we’ll ever want to do it again.”

“No,” finished Mark. “Once was enough. Now we are all safe away from it, I never want to see the island of Martinique again.”

And the others agreed with him.

Let me add a few words more, and then we will bring to a close this tale of sight-seeing and adventures in the West Indies.

What Mr. Newton and Mr. Robertson had written in their letters concerning their injuries was true. Although painful, none of the burns were serious, and they were both doing as well as could be expected. In a few days each was able to walk a little, and inside of a month both were practically as well as ever.

For the time being all business in Martinique, and a good part of that in St. Vincent, came to a standstill, and this being so nothing could be done regarding the dyewood scheme the two gentlemen had had in mind. Consequently the pair returned to the United States at the first available opportunity.

"Take good care of yourselves in the future, boys," said Mr. Robertson, on leaving.

"And let the active volcanoes alone," added Mr. Newton.

And all of the party agreed to heed the advice.

During the time spent in St. Vincent the boys made one trip northward toward La Soufriere. But though they inspected the great volcano from a dis-

tance they took good care to keep out of the zone of fire.

"It's a fearful spot," said Mark. "Worse even than around Mont Pelee. It's a regular Inferno on earth," and the others said the same.

At last came the day for the young explorers to leave St. Vincent. Anxious to learn what had become of Hockley, who had not answered a letter sent to Trinidad by him, Professor Strong engaged passage on a vessel bound for Port-of-Spain.

"Hurrah, we are off at last!" cried Darry, as they set sail. "Good-bye to the West Indies."

"After all, the trip through the islands wasn't so bad," said Sam. "We saw lots of interesting things."

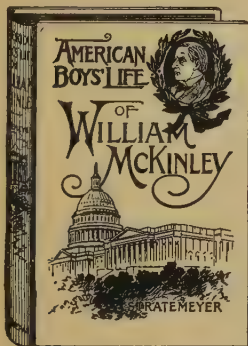
"I guess we shall see even more interesting things in the future," came from Mark.

"Of course, our sight seeing isn't half over yet," added Frank. He was right, and what the immediate future held in store for our young friends will be told in the next volume of this "Pan-American Series." In that book we shall meet all our boys and the professor once more, and learn of many things as interesting, curious, or exciting as those related in these pages.

But for the present we will leave them, and also these ill-fated islands of the Lesser Antilles, the fate of which even to-day seems uncertain. Our friends made a happy group as they steamed rapidly southward, and here let us say good-bye.

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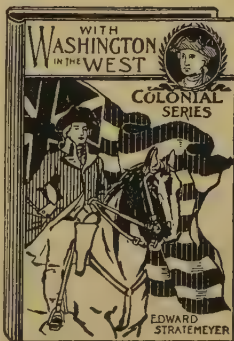
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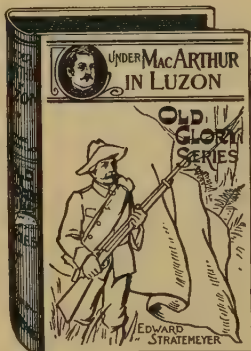
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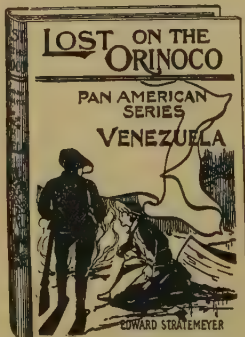
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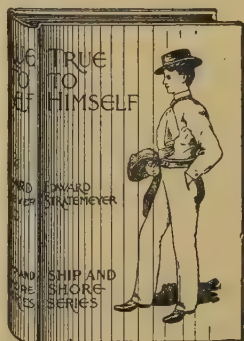
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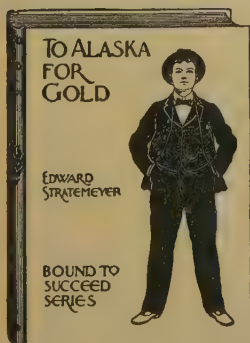
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"My Friend Jim," was the brief reply.

"Is it good?"

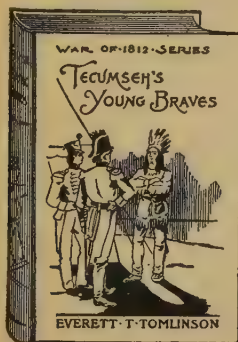
"Well, I guess; it's a dandy!" and with an impatient gesture that indicated that he did not want to be further interrupted, he turned his back toward his questioner and buried his face in his book.

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